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APR 2015
ISSUE 299

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FAST BIKES

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FIRST UK RIDE

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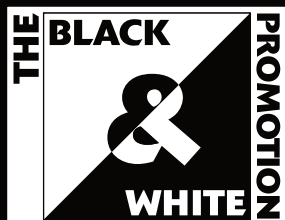
Representative Example:

36 repayments of	£159.00
Final repayment of	£4,905.00
Agreement duration	37 months
Cash price	£12,334.00
Deposit	£2,790.00

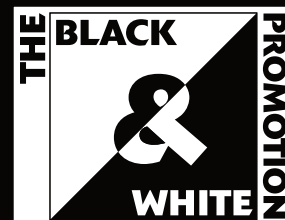
[†]Included in final repayment

This finance example is based on an annual mileage of 6,000

Total amount of credit	£9,544.00
Purchase fee [†]	£10.00
Total amount payable	£13,419.00
Interest rate (fixed)	4.80%
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Kawasaki



WELCOME



Sportsbikes are dead!

That's what pundits were proclaiming over the last few years. Amid a 'boom' in adventure bike sales, a raft of newly released retros, and last year's explosion of naked machinery, it was an easy – and lazy – statement to make. Check out the back peddling now...

We knew differently because we were listening to you lot. You'd tell us about the bikes you were buying, the mods you were making, the trackdays you were doing. OK, so they may not have been on brand new bikes, but that's because you'd had enough of incremental updates on Japanese bikes. A new bike with 2bhp more and 2kg less suddenly had to compete with looming redundancy or the higher cost of living. Upped sales in other classes were filling the void of exciting new releases in our radical, on-the-edge world.

Sales of new sportsbikes were stagnating, but that's because manufacturers weren't giving us a reason to hand over a kidney or our first born in exchange for an unchanged model with fresh paint and a new reg plate. Any new bikes that were released and had a genuine unique selling point were rewarded with healthy sales.

Meanwhile, secondhand bike sales were strong. Dealers couldn't get enough used R1s and Fireblades as canny customers realised they could walk deeper into the showroom to buy essentially the same bike as was shining away in the shop window for half the price, albeit with 4,000 miles on the clock and one owner under its belt.

The passion hasn't relented, sportsbikes still rule, but we've been happy with our lot for a few years now. That may all be about to change, however. Check out the contents page and you'll see new sportsbikes from BMW, Ducati and Yamaha. Metzeler has released a new Racetec tyre, and flick to the back pages and you'll see new racing is raring to go again.

And this is just the beginning. Much like the BMW S 1000 RR has forced Yamaha to release the R1, Honda and Suzuki will be toiling on new machines, ready to leapfrog the order that establishes itself this year. Those that have kept the faith will be rewarded!

The weather should be on the up after an eternal winter, so if you're lucky enough to be on a brand new 15-plate bike or still stuck with your trusty steed of old, just get out there, ride hard, have a great month, and make it count!

Rootsy

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THE NEXT GENERATION...



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Print 13,230
Digital 2,027

The ABC combined print and digital
publication circulation for January –
December 2013 is

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Upfront

PLANET FAST BIKES - NEW METAL, NEWS & REVIEWS



MV Agusta F4 RC

Just when you think it's safe to venture back into the shops, MV comes and tempts you with an absolute stunner...

We're used to the spectacular from MV Agusta, but even the unveiling of the F4 RC had our collective jaws hit the floor. The top end of the sportsbike market has suddenly got all very busy, and the new Reparto Corse isn't going to make life any quieter...

For all intents and purposes, this is as close as you'll get to any manufacturer's WSB efforts, offering a whopping 212bhp in a tiny 175 kilo package. The spec of the bike isn't far away from what Leon Camier is going to start the season on and Vittorio Iannuzzo in BSB for the Tsingtao squad. As you'd expect, numbers are going to be extremely limited – not least because



we'd be surprised if MV was making any money at all on each bike given the spec. MV is to keep the bike as close to £30,000 as it can, and given the fact that the Kitchen sink has been thrown at the RC we can't see how anyone is going to get rich selling these.

250 will be built, with each homologated for road use, but with a rather special box accompanying each machine. In this will be the racing kit, with a Termignoni titanium exhaust, the ECU to go with it, a carbon fibre rear seat cover and aluminium mirror caps.

If that sounds a bit light on the extras front, you need to first consider what comes standard on



the F4 RC. The spec is from another planet, with the last generation of the F4 boasting a lightened crankshaft, redesigned cylinder head, bigger fuel injectors, lighter pistons and titanium conrods as well as neat touches like titanium bolts and magnesium engine covers. On top of that little lot then comes carbon fibre fairings, forged wheels, top spec Öhlins suspension and a Lithium Ion battery. MV will even allow you to stick whatever number you desire on the fairings.

The look of the bike has been honed from when we first saw it during Autumn's showtime, and the improvements on the looks are perfection itself. We want one!



ROYAL RETURN

In a bizarre turnaround, it appears that Royal Enfield motorcycles may be made back in Britain once more. The marque is enjoying a revival beyond its base in India, with the release of the Continental GT timed perfectly to reap rich sales from retro buyers - sales are set to reach 450,000 in 2015. The new factory would be based in Leicestershire, not its original base in Redditch, but the news is still welcome. We're not expecting a move into anything faster than a speeding Bullet, but there are plans to release a new adventure bike by the end of the year...

TO THE MAX NEW AND RETRO-D VMAXS DEBUTED

We're quite partial to a VMAX, the main reason being that it's got so much power it can turn you into a hero very quickly indeed. And we like the look of both the new VMAX Carbon and the (German) yard built Cologne-based JvB-moto, built by Jens vom Brauck. The Carbon was built to celebrate 30 years of VMAX in our lives, and in a quirk of fate, no sooner had we got the new product details in our inbox, then the original designer of the bike (and soy sauce bottles), Kenji Ekuon died. So it's fitting that the Carbon offers a new lease of life for the marque, offering as it does the addition of carbon covers and a set of Akrapovic exhausts to really let the 1,679cc V4 motor bark. This tweaked version costs £18,749, but Yamaha has cut the price of the stocker to three grand less, moving it away from the crazy prices of before.



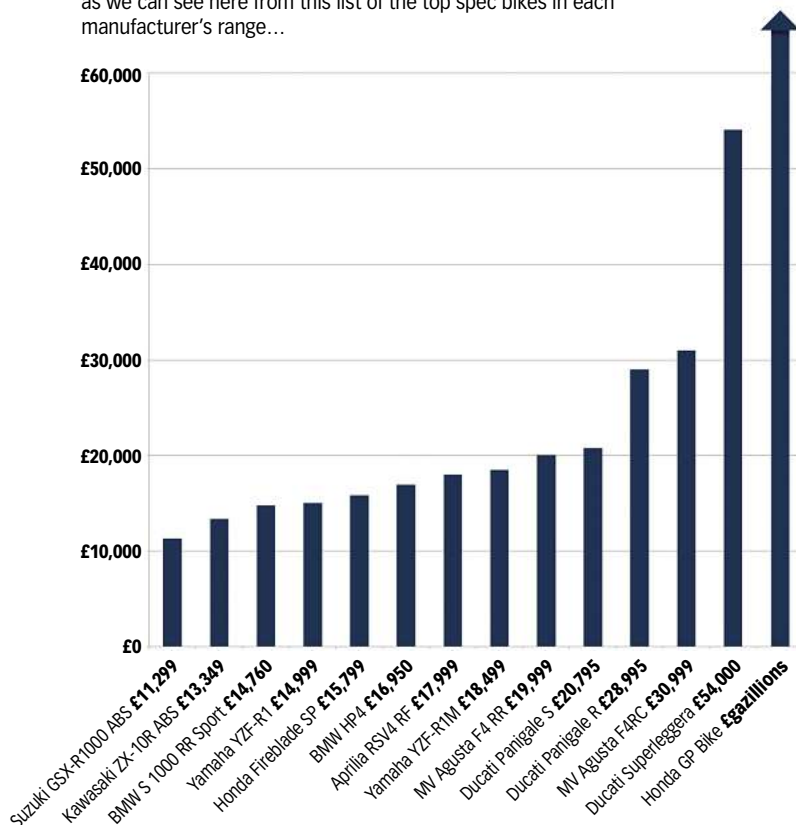
BOOMING BMW

Fresh from record sales in 2014, the news just gets better from the Bavarians in the form of record sales in January. Selling 6,263 bikes in the quietest month of the year (a boost of 15 per cent) is some going, and reflects a raft of new machines flooding into the market - as well as strong sales of the hardy perennial that is the GS. BMW has high hopes for sales of the S 1000 RR in 2015, and given its awesome reviews to date, that is likely to be achieved.



MONEY, MONEY, MONEY

Biking never gets cheaper, but boy does it like to rocket up when you start adding technology. The days of the £10k litre bike are long gone, as we can see here from this list of the top spec bikes in each manufacturer's range...



COMPETITION

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To celebrate Chaz Davies being great and X-Lite offering top lids (supplied by the lovely people at www.motogear.co.uk), we're offering you the chance to win a Chaz Davies race replica X-Lite X-802R crash helmet. Boasting a carbon, Kevlar and fibreglass shell, great ventilation, a comfortable lining and a double action visor opening system, you can see why Chaz would want to wear it while he's sticking his neck out racing. And what a paint job! Someone appears to have scrawled over the dark visor that we're including in the prize, but we'll make sure that's cleaned off when we post it. Ah, apologies, that's apparently Chaz's signature. That means it'll look brilliant either on your bonce or stuck in the pride of place at your house. To be in with a chance of winning this £399 lid (available in a size of your choice) just answer the following question:



What year did Chaz Davies win the world supersport championship?

- A** 2010
- B** 2011
- C** 2012

To enter visit www.morebikes.co.uk/competitions, and don't forget to stick your name and address down. T&Cs are here - www.fastbikesmag.com, and the competition closes on **31st March 2015**. G'luck!



THE GRID OF NEWS

Who's qualified where in this month's news race?

ROOKIE RACING

■ We love the sound of the RC 390 Cup, and if we could turn back time and dip under the 18 age limit we'd be in it like a rat up a drainpipe. It's one of the more reasonable race series, with the bike costing nearly £6,500 with entry fees of £2,100, so fits perfectly for the purpose of bringing on young talent. Race organisers have also tee'd up two spots in the Red Bull Rookie selection event for the top two in the championship – and who knows where you'll graduate from there...



ARISE SIR SHAKEY

■ Well, not quite, but Fast Bikes was in attendance when former FB tester and bike wrecker Shane 'Shakey' Byrne was awarded the Torrens Trophy at an awards lunch at the RAC Club in London. This award is fast establishing itself as a considered, independent and worthy award, and was awarded to Shakey for winning the BSB championship four times. Though not restricted to racers, Shakey's rivals were Michael Dunlop and John McGuinness for their exploits on the roads.



DRIVERLESS CARS

We've suffered from effectively driverless cars for years, but in their new electronic form we've got another road user to contend with. The Government is going hell for leather on this technology, hoping to be a world leader, hence the speed new changes has gone through to facilitate driverless car usage. Vince Cable claimed it was going to be a £900bn industry, and didn't even stick his pinky finger to his mouth, Austin Powers style. How these machines react with bikes is all up in the air, although with huge government support we can imagine who'll lose if we ever end up interfacing with one.



AS YOU WERE...

■ Just as we were expecting to settle onto a tiny patch of grass on the banks of Craner Curves, it was announced by Donington Park that the event was off. The spat concerned funding the improvements required by Donington park to hold the event, with Donington saying agreement hadn't been reached and the Circuit of Wales saying nothing had been signed. Work on the new track is set to start in March. Dorna can't be happy with this very public falling out, and having to Tipp-Ex so many calendars. Silverstone has stepped in for the 2015 and 2016, so it's as you were! Anyone that booked tickets for Donny are pointed in the direction of their website – www.donington-park.co.uk



ROAD TO RECOVERY

It's not good news that nearly 100 Bike Trac equipped bikes were nicked last year, but it is good news that they were all recovered! The monetary value of those bikes stands at nearly a million quid. Stats show that South London was the stolen bike capital of the UK, with near four in five bikes recovered from this area. It's a £300 investment, but what price do you put on seeing your pride and joy again?



BRAMMO BUY OUT

Covering future bases, Polaris, owners of Victory and Indian motorcycles, has bought fellow Statesiders, Brammo. The electric bike builder was bought for an undisclosed fee, but with Harley-Davidson making more noises about moving to the light side, Polaris has bought its way into the market. Brammo is a prime purchase, too. With established products and a growing following, it's a brand that people have a growing trust in as well as having heritage in this new market. Sales were faltering, so a big parent to see it through the dark days is a decent outcome for all – bar manufacturing staff. So long as Brammos stay fresh and funky and don't start powering Victory's about, we'll be happy.



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FOR THE RIDE

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WORDS: ROOTSY PICS: ICON

Icon ZX3-RR

US clothing manufacturer builds a teenagers wet dream...

We've long said that a shake up of racing would reap rich rewards by the time bikes filter down to the showroom, and no more is that true in the smaller classes. With a range of decent tiddlers now on sale across the globe, the time is right to convert them into fleets of racers, ready to terrorise both Tarmac and track. Moto3 may be the most exciting class on the ticket, but what is there replicating these machines on the road?

US clothing manufacturer Icon knows this, and that's why it's pumped a load of money into this, its uber cool ZX3-RR project.

Teaming up with Kawasaki USA, a humble Kawasaki Ninja 300 has been spectacularly converted into a full blown racebike but bereft of the scary power figures you usually associate with racing, thus making it relatively parent friendly. Icon has been associated with the stunt world, but this move into racing bodes well...

Attired in race fairings, and boasting Öhlins R&T suspension and a two-stroke style Arrow exhaust, the humble Ninja is turned into something with a dynamic edge that both young and old can utilise to improve track skills. The base bike is perfectly packaged for the road, but in this

form the potential is clear.

A Samsung tablet dashboard keeps the kids interested, with the ability to broadcast lap times on social media. This offers a glimpse into what we'll be gazing down on in a few years time. MV Agusta is actively involved in this type of technology, with Aprilia's PMP app the first step in integrating technology and bikes.

We don't care where kick-ass concepts come from, and don't mind one bit if their chief design was to sell more leathers. All we want is fresh ideas, and in the form of this Icon Ninja ZX3-RR we've got the direction that bikes should be taking...





MOTOVEN
 P&L
 aki
 MOTUL
 G
 G
 G



Using: Nikon D750 with a 300mm AFS lens, ISO 100, shutter at 1/125th gave f5.6, single point AF on continuous.

Moto Photo

Like a lot of people, for me this time of year brings bike-related aspirational thoughts, and this year's winter brain wasp takes the form of Do I Want A 390? Sometimes I get 99 per cent of the way to opening the front door – not of the nearby KTM dealer, but of my house – and setting off. Just to look at one, or sit on it. Not get one, just going for a look. Definitely just a look.

In this pic from the end-of-year best bikes wrap-up feature, Simon's doing a reasonable job of making it look very appealing, by demonstrating something about what the RC experience might be like. Some photos do that, most don't – but that's more of a luck thing than something we can do deliberately. Neither of us is a magician, we just know what might make an occurrence of magic. I'd like to suggest that my choice of a slightly slower shutter speed

than normal means the extra whizziness helps in this respect, which it does, but again I can't claim it was entirely intentional.

Anyway back to weighing in on the scales of doubt. In no particular order; I'd look silly on it (as I do most bikes) which comes under the same heading as I'm not sure about the colour scheme. A bike's ability to generate desire has a lot to do with what it looks like; that's not just me, is it? It looks pretty good in some pictures, but for me it would be a more likely purchase if it had less orange about it. Also, wouldn't it look better if the headlight area was a bit more substantial?

It's tiddly, but surprisingly spacious, and actually that whole lightweight flat-out race bike on the road thing is most of the appeal, and the fact that people who know more about it than me have pointed out that it might

have the makings of a cult classic – sometimes even citing the RD350 – counts as about four entries in the "pro" column.

Next; five grand is five grand. Much better value than its smaller capacity brother, but cuddle up to it and instead of the price sounding like they're doing you a favour it seems less of a fair exchange. That probably changes on riding it, but until then the price versus perception ratio adds to the doubt, and someone else will probably buy the one that I haven't (quite likely as they're selling well).

So like a lot of people my scales are balanced at 49 per cent, therefore I 100 per cent don't have a small KTM. But as I've spent 0 per cent of five thousand pounds on one, that's fair, especially as I can spend £0 looking at my pictures of it... and I'm 100 per cent sure I wouldn't look like this if I did.

WORDS AND PICS: JONNY GAWLER

Retro Racing

While Britain froze in January, a few racers fled south to race thunderous retro superbikes in Oz

After a long ten years, you Pommies finally snared the team challenge in this year's AMCN International Island Classic. Good on ya! Once again, big crowds witnessed a record breaking 522 entries and 342 riders taking to the Phillip Island track on the last weekend of January.

Last year's joint winners, Shawn Giles and Ulsterman Jeremy McWilliams (pictured) were the two hot favourites to duke it out again for the Ken Wootton Perpetual Trophy. But this year the pair were facing an even tougher battle with some new names coming to play on the island. Names such as Jed Mecher, who will this year race for the PR Racing team in BSB, former 500cc/BSB star Paul Young, and half Aussie, half Brit, Glen Richards.

At the end of the puzzle it was Ryan Farquhar who brought home the bacon after he scored an 8-4-6-5 result to prove Barry Sheene's motto, which was 'to finish first, first you must finish', was correct. Farquhar was two points ahead of Conor Cummins, who was also making his debut at the Island Classic. Third place went to McWilliams, who suffered clutch issues throughout the weekend that cost him the overall win. However, this result made it a UK podium lockout leaving us Aussies to ponder whether the Queen sent them all a telegram?

Tahbilk International Challenge final points

1 United Kingdom 617, **2** Australia 575,
3 America 445, **4** New Zealand 341

WORDS & PICS: RUSS COLVIN



Where's the tinnies? Ryan Farquhar celebrates in style...



Young gun Jed Mecher (91) getting some early BSB training in



Cameron Donald's Suzuki XR69 gets some special lovin'



John McGuinness returned in 2015, riding a Honda powered Harris F1

Gear Up

ALL THE LATEST, COOLEST & TRICKEST PERFORMANCE PRODUCTS

SECURITY

How much security have you got on your bike, or around your home to protect your ride? Can you ever have enough?

You've probably been there before, stood looking at your bike and wondering if you can be bothered to put on that disc-lock. It's been a long ride, you're either too cold or too hot, tired, and you can already envision that steaming cup of tea or cool beer. At that precise moment, rifling through your bag and bending down to fit the lock seems like the hardest thing in the world. It's quiet around here, there's little crime, your neighbour's an ex-SAS hardnut. There are always excuses... Then, from somewhere, a voice in your head reminds you that even if you fit that disc-lock, it's only the very least you can do to stop your bike going walkies. Because when it comes to dedicated thieves, sadly, it can pose little defence against them if they're able to pick the bike up, stick it in a van and deal with the lock at their leisure. But you put it on, because it's one small deterrent you can apply to save on the potential heartache, and your insurance premium inevitably going up.

Yet, the truth is even if you're out and about there's plenty you can do these

days to keep things secure, seriously improving your chances of either putting the thieving scum off permanently or getting your bike back quicker. We here at FB have had our fair share of sorrow in the past. We've had bikes picked up and thrown into vans, never to be seen again. Another has had a bike stolen which wasn't secured, while another machine parked just feet away was saved due to the huge Oxford chain locking it down. They'd had a go at it too, but the length of time it was taking to break meant they legged it. Doing whatever you can should create some incentive to make them think twice. And now we have trackers to help identify a stolen bike's location too, as well as a stunning array of hardware that will make stealing your ride a daunting enough proposition for a Transformer, never mind a ratty scumbag. So, sit back and peruse all the stuff here you haven't got. Have a really good think about it, then work out what would help you secure your bike from the hell that is walking out of your front door, or opening your garage, and seeing an empty space...



OXFORD TRACKER
£199 + subscription fees www.oxprod.com

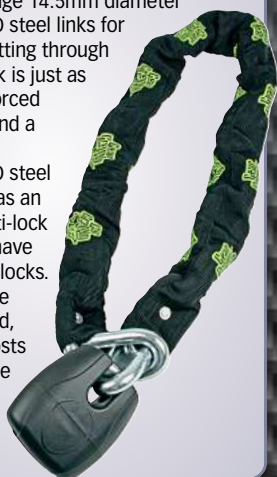
Trackers are starting to become very popular, and Oxford Products now joins the fray with its own system. Powered by DanTracker technology, it runs through your phone, tablet or computer, using GPS to chat to the tracking unit. It can locate the tracker anywhere where there's a mobile phone network, so you're screwed if it's nicked from Cadwell! If the thieves have a secret underwater base, it may struggle, but otherwise it'll do its job as promised. You can run multiple units through your single account if you so wish, it's waterproof and the



battery has a ten-year life expectancy meaning there's no need to charge it. There's also no need to wire it directly to your bike either. Subscription fees to the service runs from £60 for a year up to £180 for five years, which we'd say is more than reasonable.

GEAR GREMLIN FURY CHAIN LOCK
£109.99 www.thekeycollection.co.uk

This Fury lock and chain is a mammoth monster, with huge 14.5mm diameter hardened CR-MO steel links for the chain. Try getting through that! The padlock is just as hefty, with reinforced cylinder plates and a 13mm diameter hardened CR-MO steel shackle which has an anti-pick and anti-lock mechanism, as have all Gear Gremlin locks. It has a 1.2-metre chain as standard, the 1.5-metre costs £119.99 while the 1.8-metre comes in at £129.99.



OXFORD Hardcore XL CHAIN
£74.99 www.oxprod.com

By all accounts, this is the best selling chain and padlock combination in the UK. It is also, in point of fact, a slightly newer version of the combo that saved one of our own bikes from a bout of thievery once. The square-chain links are 12mm, and covered in a tough protective fabric sleeve. The lock's body is made from forged hardened steel, with an 11mm shackle made from the same material. It is sledge hammer, saw, bolt cropper and drill resistant, and can stomach 4.3 tonnes of anti-jack strength, and has also been freeze tested, too. It costs £74.99 for the 1.2 metre chain, going up to £94.99 for the 2 metre chain option. They also have a lock carrier available, or you can purchase the lock by itself for £29.99.



ALMAX SERIES IV UBER CHAIN & SQUIRE LOCK
£149.95 www.almax-security-chains.co.uk

This the absolute daddy of the chains here, with whopping 19mm quadruple tempered links made from carbon manganese steel enhanced with boron. The Almax Immobiliser Series IV Uber and Squire SS65CS lock, to give its full designation, is Thatcham approved and claimed impervious to bolt cropper attacks. Hacksaws also have no chance here, either. It's also zinc-plated for corrosion protection, and the long links ward off sledge, wedge and freezing thieving shenanigans too. The Squire lock is their flagship product, with a hardened boron steel shackle, anti-drill cylinder and an independent CEN 6 rating, which also can't be bolt-cropped due to the solid steel closed shackle system. £149.95 gets you a 1 metre chain and lock, while the longest 2 metre will set you back £235.95. Bad boy!



ABUS GRANIT EXTREME PLUS 59

£213.99

WWW.FERIDAX.COM

The Granit is a beast, featuring a 12mm chain with a protective fabric sleeve to stop any damage to a bike's paintwork. All the tough parts, the chain and so on, are made from special hardened steel including parts of the locking mechanism. It uses patented Abus Power Link Technology to offer a direct covered locking of the chain into the locking mechanism. It sits at the maximum security level of 25, comes with two keys and the code for replacements if necessary. Big, butch and beefy, the Granit scares us just looking at it.



HS1 HEAVY DUTY HASP & STAPLE

from £48

WWW.SECURITYFORBIKES.COM

This is used primarily for securing doors or garages, or whatever, for more protection. The more you have, the longer it'll take them to get through it all, and the less likely they are to take you on. The HS1 is hardened, has a welded hinge and uses eight concealed coach bolt fixings (not pictured), to secure it. It allows the use of shackle locks, unlike many other hasps on the market, and is therefore a little more expensive. But you get what you pay for, let's not forget. This kind of product just enhances your chances of not being done over and you can upgrade it with the Beef-Up kit. This consists of super high quality bolts, nuts, washers and all sorts to, um beef up your hasp. Check their website for more details.



XENA ALARM DISC-LOCK

£69.98

WWW.MOTOHAUS.COM



This natty little number has a rather loud 120dB alarm powered by a single lithium battery, activated by shock and motion sensors. The locking pin is made from carbide-reinforced hardened steel, while the rest is made from a stainless-steel mono-block construction. For a disc-lock, it's pretty imposing and bloody loud!

TORC GROUND ANCHOR II

£64.95

WWW.SECURITYFORBIKES.COM



The Torc Series II ground anchor uses four very high quality fixings, and features a hardened 20mm shackle made from steel. It's case hardened, resisting freezing grinding and also cutting attacks, and is claimed to be tough or near impossible to be bolt-cropped. It's also constructed to be a complete 'D', meaning any low life having a go would have to cut it twice to best it. It also folds flat to make it even harder to access and has an aperture large enough to accommodate nearly most chains of any girth, and is corrosion resistant in case it's fitted outdoors. The kit comes with six different choices of fitment to be attached to any different surfaces of whatever orientation, or material. It also comes with a kit to be used inside a van, too. It's Sold Secure Gold rating approved, also officially Police approved and is made in Britain too, hooray!

BIKE TRAC

£299.99 + subscription fees

WWW.BIKETRAC.COM



One of the better known tracker units on the market, and arguably the best overall, Bike Trac is quickly building a name for itself. In one month alone in 2014, 17 bikes were recovered and they have discovered machines stolen in the UK as far away as Lithuania! The unit itself we aren't allowed to show, for obvious reasons, but it is small and fitted with GPS, GPMA, GSM and RF capability. As such, you can record your rides too, and relive them via the mapping function, as well as finding it when robbed. Our Yamaha YZF-R6 competition winner Ian had one fitted to the R6, and has been raving about it. He moved the bike about two-foot without the ignition key inserted once, and within seconds had an alert sent to his phone and a subsequent call to check everything was OK. We've had similar situations with press bikes when we've put them in vans too! The annual fee is £99, but if you have a bike valuable in monetary terms or simply valuable to you, it could be that this is the best way of making sure you see it again.

ABUS DETECTO 7000 RS1

£121.99

WWW.FERIDAX.COM

The Abus RS1 disc-lock uses a 3x5, square steel bolt to secure the bike, it's a special blend of hardened steel too. However, this is also an alarm which can reach a minimum 110db when it goes off. It has a special 'snap and go' one-hand operation mechanism and a multi-colour LED, which gives information about alarm status, battery status and activation. It comes with two keys and also two AAA batteries to power the alarm. And unlike some of the more dubious hard-wired alarm systems, it won't kill your bike if it goes off for hours on end. Smart looking bit of kit, and very handy for when out and about.



XENA XGA GROUND ANCHOR

£50

WWW.MOTOHAUS.COM



This anchor uses just a single bolt to secure, meaning you don't need to drill multiple holes or line up any templates. But it boasts the same strength as multi-bolt units. It has the Gold standard award from Sold Secure, can be fixed to a wall as well as a floor and has a 'fold-flat' design to keep out of the way when not in use. It also rotates between 360-degrees for easier accessibility. Smart unit, well priced and very impressively thought out.

Gearred Up

ALL THE LATEST, COOLEST & TRICKEST PERFORMANCE PRODUCTS

GAERNE: GP1 BOOTS

■ Back in the day Gaerne were major players in the GP scene, all the big hitters wore their product at some time or another in their careers. Actually, they still are a big deal, it's just that other boot manufacturers have risen to prominence in recent decades. But now they're back with a big bang in the UK, and happy to show off their top of the line boot, the GP1. It features the unique Floating System, fashioned from a carbon composite which allows natural movement but prevents nasty ankle twisting. Two slots limit movement in both directions avoiding hyperextension. It also has a

shock-absorbing heel cup made from non-deformable polyurethane, also protected by a low-friction magnesium slider. There's an adjustable calf-closing system, and also a high-wear-resistant magnesium toe-slider, whose attachment points are far from the usual abrasion areas. The front shin-plate is made from anatomically shaped PU and is easily replaceable. The sole is of variable density for extra grip, while the innersole is removable and washable, yet designed for excellent weight-distribution and full-support for your foot. All in all, a bloody decent boot and rather smart looking, too.



£259.99

www.motogear.co.uk

NOLAN N64: GEMINI

■ You don't need to pay big bucks for a good lid with a smart paint job. This is the N64 showing off Team Hero EBR's rider, and former MotoGP crasher, Niccolò Canepa's colours. Aptly, it's got a Nintendo vibe to it, although there are many other replica racer schemes available on the N64. The lid itself has a polycarbonate shell. In the old days, those words would have given us the shivers but in 2015, technology and materials have moved on a lot and that shell is one tough cookie. It also has a quick-release visor, a Pinlock insert included (a nice touch) and a special comfort interior. At this price, you can't really go wrong.



£99.99

www.motogear.co.uk

YAMAHA: RACING WATCH

■ Fancy owning a watch that Valentino Rossi may (or may not) wear, even if it's just for the promotional advertising? Of course you do! This latest collaboration between Yamaha and Dutch watch manufacturer TW Steel riffs on Yamaha's racing heritage and activities, with a decent range of colours to suit individual tastes. It's a natty little number too, with a steel case, a gunmetal plate steel crown and a reinforced face

made from mineral crystal glass. It's water-resistant too, in case you ever meet Vale and flood it with your tears of happiness. There is a VR46 version alongside those who would just prefer a Yamaha branded one, and one featuring the M1 logo to boot. Nice!



£99.99

www.yamaha-motor.co.uk/accessories

OXFORD: RP-1 SUIT

■ Considering this is a fledgling effort from Oxford Products, we must say they've nailed a cracking suit off the bat and at a competitive price point, too. They've even persuaded some top racers into giving them a thorough try out in 2015 as well, like Michael Laverty in BSB. It has a cowhide outer shell and Amamid stretch material for extra comfort and flexibility. Its structure is reinforced at several places with extra layers in critical areas, and features soft impact-absorbing padding. It has abrasion resistant TPU sliders at various places like shoulder and elbow, and racing compound knee sliders, presumably for when you're late for work in the morning. It's perforated in the right places and has a removable and washable inner lining. A cracking job all around!



£499.99

www.oxprod.com

DUCATI: RACING KIT CASE

■ It's a bag, it's got Ducati written on it and the really clever part is, you can put things in it. Do you really need to know any more about a bag? Yes? Oh, all right, you can put motorbike related clothing in it – that do you? In fact, these bags aren't huge, yet are large enough to fit a bagged helmet, full one-piece suit, boots, a couple of pairs of gloves, a back-protector and still have room for some casual clothing and other bits and pieces. We know this as we've used one a few times. The tightening straps mean it can be compressed nicely, so you won't have to go to the oversized luggage queue at the airport, giving you another minute or two to browse the duty-free. It also has one of those handy extendable handles, with matching wheels, so you can annoy people by tripping them up after they've walked behind you. We may jest, but a dedicated kit bag is an essential for jet setting bikers these days.



£149.99

www.ducatiuk.com

DB HOLDERS: SUBFRAMES

■ These awesome subframes are manufactured in aerospace grade aluminium alloy with a black finish. There are many race teams out there that use these on their bikes, and more than a few normal folk who want to upgrade their own bikes to something a bit more special, too. As we type, the range includes the Ducati 1199 Panigale (and 899), 848, 1098 and 1198 as well as Aprilia's RSV4, Kawasaki ZX-10R, BMW S 1000 RR, Honda CBR1000 RR and Yamaha's R series. More bikes are added to the list all the time, so check with Moto46 to see if your is, should you fancy one – and why would you not?



£238.00

www.moto46.co.uk

DB HOLDERS: FAIRING BRACKETS



■ Why not compliment a DB subframe with a DB fairing bracket? These are made from the same aerospace grade aluminium, and are also black. Any required air-tubes are made from glass-fibre, while the fairing mounting points are all fashioned from reinforced carbon-Kevlar. Air-ducts are also available, give Moto46 a tinkle if you're interested in those without the bracket.

£98.00

www.moto46.co.uk

SCRAMBLER: OUTDOOR JACKET

■ We all know the new Scrambler range is from Ducati, but the Italians are going to great pains to keep the two brands separate and let the Scrambler line create a life of its own. As such, some of their kit has been created by alternative Italian manufacturers to the associations we usually expect from Ducati. This Scrambler Outdoor jacket is made by Spidi, and as we're already aware, Spidi make some rather fine motorcycling garments. Specifically, this is pointed towards the Urban Enduro Version of the Scrambler. It comes with CE approved armour, can fit a back protector in, and is made for all weathers. It's a three-layer exterior featuring elasticised, waterproof and breathable soft-shell materials, with dedicated zips for ventilation. The thermal internal layer is also removable, and there are men's and women's versions available, should you wish to play jacket 'snap' with your other half.



£299.99

www.ducatiuk.com

FIVE: RFX1 GLOVE

■ Five gloves are gaining in popularity, and we're quite sure they already make the most expensive racing glove on the market. It's some piece of work, but not all of us can splurge, so they have another less pricey item that doesn't skimp on the specification. The RFX1 gloves, as worn by the Lowes brothers,



are made from full-grain cowhide, with goatskin leather between the fingers. The rest of the glove is festooned with carbon, Kevlar, PU bits and pieces, and even sheepskin leather. They're beautifully made and make for some genuine competition for the top of the line market leaders such as Knox, Spidi, Held and Alpinestars. They come in sizes XS-3XL.

£159.99

www.motogear.co.uk



BMC: AIR-FILTERS

■ The rather superb BMC air-filters will now be coming into the UK through those fine purveyors of protection, R&G Racing. BMC is an Italian brand, and has the proper nous when it comes to making better breathing filters. They're constructed using a multi-layered cotton gauze, which is then soaked in low viscosity oil and lathered with an epoxy-coated alloy mesh. This prevents oxidation, we're told. Aside from making an engine breathe better, and perhaps adding a gee-gee here and there, a big benefit is not having to replace them. A mere sprinkle of a wash and a re-oiling session makes it like brand new. Can't be bad, eh? They come in three offerings, Street, Race and Carbon Racing. That last one is for the top bracket of pricing, if you need to ask! They cater for pretty much every bike, so if you fancy a good filter, get online and see how much one is for your bike, tout de suite, Rodney!

£40 – £350

www.rg-racing.com

ROARR

The all new sports race boot. Built with Sidi technology.



BLACK



BLACK / ANTH



BLACK / WHITE

Upper in TECHNOMICRO fibre
Lined with air Teflon Mesh
Fixed Shin Plate
Replaceable slider
Techno 3 mechanism for improved leg fit
Anti-twist ankle support braces
Zipper elastic panel
Air ventilation system
Heel cup for impact absorption
Nylon inner sole
Removable arch support

THE MANE ATTRACTION **£199.95** SRP

NOT
FOR
LITTLE
PUSSIES



LAUNCH



YAMAHA YZF-R1

The R1 is back. Faster, lighter and cleverer than ever.
And just to make sure, a trick new R1M model is
offered too. That should do the job, right?

WORDS: ROOTSY
PICS: ALESSIO BARBANTI,
HENNY BENNO STERN,
JOSH EVANS

The best things come to those who wait, but Yamaha fans have had to have the patience of a saint for the second coming of the YZF-R1. The release of the original machine in 1998 changed the sportsbike landscape forever, prompting a sportsbike arms race the likes of which we'd never seen. Subsequent revisions of the R1 always drove the bike forward so it could stand toe-to-toe against its invigorated Japanese rivals, but the impact of each new model on the market was like a meteor hit – compared to the asteroid strike of the original. We in the UK loved it, and nearly 30,000 R1s have been sold since its inception.

Yamaha prophesised that the 2009 crossplane-crank version of the R1 was a return to God-like status, and the radical departure of the engine's architecture was a refreshing deviation from otherwise staid sportsbike solutions. But the switch to the funny firing order masked the reality that in terms of pure numbers; the R1 was generating nothing new. BMW soon proved what was possible with an inline-four superbike, prompting the end of the R1's decade in the sun. In a world that was already in recession, the R&D taps were turned off and the R1 had to fend for itself, with just a traction control system and natty top-clamp to show for nearly six years of development.

Those first few years in this new austere world were bleak, with no end in sight, but changes within Yamaha sparked life into the company, engendering a renewed desire to build the best bikes it could, hence the MT series rocking onto the scene, other refreshes in the range and now this, the ultimate sign of the company's resurrection - the long awaited return of the R1. 🍀

» Learning from its mistakes and, ultimately, low ambitions, the 2015 R1 is one of those kitchen sink projects, hence the kitchen sink of a launch, held at Eastern Creek on the outskirts of Sydney, the scene of the 2009 bike's debut.

The design brief from Yanagi-san, Yamaha's new broom, was short but very sweet – make the best sportsbike in the world. The Europeans had shown Yamaha the blueprint; push 200bhp, pack it full of electronics and employ exotic materials to cut weight. And if all that wasn't enough, add a limited edition version to emphasise its mastery of manufacturing.

Without a world superbike test bed to experiment with, Yamaha used the fastest lab in the world, its M1 MotoGP project, and the new R1 uses solutions developed in the white hot heat of competition. Though used in marketing, Messrs Rossi and Lorenzo weren't specifically used in R&D, but the technology used on their weapons grade missiles was.

Much of the machine is made to ape the

title winning 2011 M1. Yamaha realises that the sportsbike market is shrinking, but that it has also become hardcore, so what better bike than the M1 to point R&D in the direction of. The first stage of development was to put an R1 engine into an R6 chassis. This caused issues with heating and getting it full of air, but these sort of things are insurmountable. Once these conundrums were solved, the next issue was to pack it with tech, software and hardware that Yamaha has developed in house – along with 90 per cent of the bike. Only when that happened was the project signed off, hoping it achieves Yamaha's aims of it being the fastest bike on track, packed with tech and offering the full M1 experience. No-one mentioned rain, though.

You see, you can build this great bike, programme ace software, package everything perfectly (it looks great in the flesh), and travel halfway around the world for a day on track (flying the bikes over in the process), but it's still hard to book the weather, Yamaha

failing to seal the cloud that hung over the Sydney track in the morning. So rather than hoon round the track like idiots, we could appreciate the cultured things; the switch from 43 steel to aluminium bolts to save 250 grams, the beauty of the TIG welded three-piece aluminium sheet tank (the world's lightest for the volume), and the new machining on every gear in the 'box.

That over, it was off to hoon round the track in a fine mizzle, you know, the type that gets you really wet. I'd not sat on the bike before, and swinging a leg over it was a revelation. Smiling down the pitlane, you just know this thing is going to work. Compact, poised and intuitive, the riding position is a giant step from the old bike, which always felt too big, too wide and too comfortable at the end of the day. It's not uncomfortable, just purposeful.

A session in the damp is always a decent start to the day, where you're able to explore the bike without riding like a banshee. Friendly fuel injection (even in full fat A-mode), tons of torque throughout the range, a slick shifter and manful brakes (proving you don't need to have Brembo emblazoned on a caliper) all kicked the party off in sophisticated style. All that's needed now is for the weather forecast to come true and the sun to shine down on the righteous.

It struggles to come out, but the clouds have given all they can, meaning the afternoon can proceed as expected. And with the Bridgestone RS10Rs toasting nicely (an upgrade from the bike's stock RS10s) it meant that it was all action out of the pitlane and into turn two.

A few damp patches meant a lap of caution, but after that the gloves were off...

It's not short of power, thundering to 285kph with a gear to spare down the front »

“IT'S NOT SHORT OF POWER, THUNDERING TO 285KPH WITH A GEAR TO SPARE...” ”





That's some rear end!

straight. It sounds awesome on board, the bigger airbox broadcasting the crossplane crank's notes magnificently (although off the bike the can sounds a little muted). Using the appropriate gradients to full advantage, it fires out of the third gear first turn viciously well, with its arsenal of electronics keeping disaster in check and the impressive new Bridgestone RS10s obediently tracking a line.

With a myriad of settings to go through, it's hard to pick the perfect setting in so few sessions. The linear delivery of Power Mode A with the TCS at Level 3 prompted a few miniscule stutters in drive, and the small interventions naturally pitched weight to the front, standing the bike up in the process (a bit like the end of a slide, funnily enough). But hone in on a setting to suit and the package is all but forgotten on track – so long as you turn the LIF system off. Even on Level One, the cut when the front rises more than

an inch or two loses a little momentum out of uphill turns, although much of this is made up by the ECU dishing out the instructions to the rear, rather than your own analogue inputs sorting stuff out.

I have an unnatural suspicion of linked brake systems, but in this configuration the balance the UBS technology offers is impressive. Even with a sharp tug into downhill turns, which would normally render the rear redundant, the input to the back caliper is enough to keep everything in check, leaving you to explore all the advantages of the slipper clutch. The front brake, though not badged Brembo (it's one of Yamaha's own efforts), has a stack of power, and though not a heavy braking circuit, it offered deft control, allied to the resistance in the Kayaba fork.

Speaking of suspension, the badges may not be bang on, but Kayaba has supplied a

Which would you want?



JOSH BROOKES – MY NEW RIDE

People often ask me if I go out and do trackdays to prepare, but I don't at all. The last time I rode a bike on track was at the last round at Brands Hatch. The reason is that I don't see the link between riding a street bike on a trackday and racing. Riding anything less than my race bike is just pointless – and expensive. Street bikes are just soft, heavy and under powered.

But this new bike has changed my mind a bit. The electronics on it have evolved so much. From where I used it last in BSB, it's better than that and the influence of MotoGP is huge. You can still tell it's street legal, and it's still soft because you can't give people a race bike, but it was still doing what it needed to do on track. You're opening the throttle and it's giving you the appropriate amount of power. It might not be 200bhp, but then you don't want that. I can feel that the power's not at full, but I can understand why it's doing it.

I was testing it out on the brakes, banging the gears back, chucking more at it, and the electronics took over again. The clutch and engine braking works together to give you this big long slide like a proper racebike would. It's working. Do that on other bikes going into T1 at Eastern Creek and you'll be off.

A few years ago I'd be in and out of the pits trying to sort stuff, but now you buy a bike from the dealership and it's all done for you. To be honest, I couldn't feel the electronic suspension working on the R1M. I felt like I was restricted by the performance of the tyres, not the performance of the bike, and that's pretty complimentary on the R1. It wasn't wallowing, or diving, so maybe it is all a step ahead, where it doesn't show you the signs of the problems you get. But I can feel the electronics work on the motor, like it tries to pick up the front wheel and normally where you might feather off a bit or riding the rear brake, you're still screwing it on but the front just drops back down.

And before you ask, I can't compare directly to my new racebike because the only time I've ridden it was up to the stage at the presentation in Milan. A racebike is faster, more noisy and hard, and the R1 is close to this, you can feel the race bike is not far from the surface here.

One happy boy





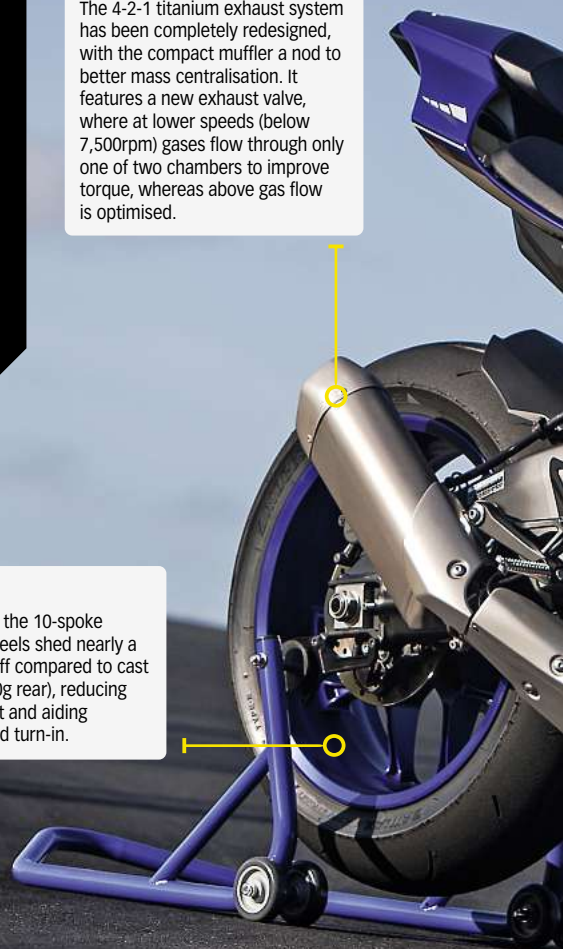
There's a slide incoming here!

EXHAUST

The 4-2-1 titanium exhaust system has been completely redesigned, with the compact muffler a nod to better mass centralisation. It features a new exhaust valve, where at lower speeds (below 7,500rpm) gases flow through only one of two chambers to improve torque, whereas above gas flow is optimised.

WHEELS

Between them, the 10-spoke magnesium wheels shed nearly a kilo of weight off compared to cast (530g front, 340g rear), reducing inertial moment and aiding acceleration and turn-in.



BRAKES

Shunning the move many have made to Brembo, the R1 uses home brewed four piston monoblock calipers, chomping on 320mm discs, but for the first time the R1 uses ABS and a Unified Brake System, their acronym for linked brakes. This is controlled electronically through the figures pumped out of the IMU (Inertial Measurement Unit), although does not work if you're using the rear brake yourself.

INTERVIEW: YZF-R1 PROJECT LEADER

Hideki Fujiwara is the magician responsible for the R1 project.

FB: This bike seems like it was a huge project, using many new materials, concepts, processes.

HF: Yes, there were so many people in the development team, between 50 and 100 at different times.

FB: You worked on the original R1, right?

HF: Yes, I was just an engine designer then. I designed the valve system, the combustion chamber, those parts.

FB: So how does building the two bikes compare?

HF: Fuel injection was a big change, so from 2002. That was difficult, so was developing the YCC-T. But now the most difficult point is how to make good drivability. Horsepower is now huge, from 150bhp to 200bhp, so to control this is hard. We have to have electronic devices to control this power. We spend a lot of time on controlling big power.

FB: So how close are the electronics to those in MotoGP?

HF: Very close, almost the same. We brought technology and people from MotoGP to work on this, as well as two designers from the MotoGP team.

FB: Did you make any compromises on cost or complications?

HF: I didn't give up on anything I wanted. I got it all. Cost is important and a big issue, but on this project I tell my designers not to think about cost – only to think about performance and to lose weight in a religious way. Costs were my problem, so I give them freedom in design.

FB: And the influence came from MotoGP.

HF: Yes, I and my team rode the MotoGP bike in 2011, the M1. We felt it was easy to control. Very precise, giving good feeling, smooth and very natural. So if we concentrated on the circuit, we could make the next R1 like this.



sublime set of springs. Eastern Creek is not without its challenges; bumps into turn one, downhill entries and grid markings on a corner, but both front and rear deal with it all brilliantly. Though 'optimised' for track by Yamaha's insanely fast tester Jeffrey de Vries, the rear still sank a little as the electronics stymied what would be the natural transfer of the stroke. This is largely due to the TCS, but the more subtle cuts of the slide system fully integrate themselves into the package. Bolstered compression on the front added more resistance on the way into the slower stuff.

With the wheelie control turned off, power in A-mode, TCS on two and SCS on level one, the next session was well and truly deposited in my bank of epic riding. Turning tightly, being bang on line and then letting the R1 rip out of each turn is something special. There's a hint of 1199 Panigale about it, but a Panigale

TANK

Over 1.5kg lighter than a steel tank, this aluminium version fits 17 litres of fuel in, as well as neat sculpting to accommodate your knees.

LIGHTS

The R1's front is 8 per cent sleeker than the old one, helped in part by the use of the LED headlights and position lights. They are also placed lower and closer to the bike to improve weight distribution.

CLUTCH

Yamaha calls this an assist and slipper clutch, and is nearly 20 per cent lighter than before, as well as being smaller. It acts as an assist on the way up and a slipper on the way down.

SUSPENSION

Kayaba provides the suspension on the standard bike, with 43mm upside down forks offering 120mm of travel. The monoshock at the rear is fully adjustable.

ENGINE Befitting the new bike, it's all change in the engine, but Yamaha keeps with the crossplane concept. Debuted in 2009, the motor didn't produce any more power than the conventionally firing model, but that's all changed now. In the guts of the R1 is a new shorter (36mm) and lighter crankshaft, keeping the uneven firing order and plumping up low and midrange grunt. A balancer is used down the length of the crank but thinner, whose weights are close to the outer cylinders. Bore and stroke is also changed (now 79 x 50.9mm from 78 x 52.2mm), with the new pistons sitting within hewn from forged aluminium with DLC coated rings. Con-rods are made from titanium, offering a weight saving of 40 per cent. It's all change at the top end, too, with the first use of a DLC coated rocker arm valve drive mechanism to give higher valve lift than the cam height. Compression is upped to 13.0:1 and valves get engorged too, with 33mm intake and 26.5mm exhaust holes – valve angle is narrower, too. The 10.5 litre airbox is 24 per cent larger than before, while the YCC-T throttle uses two directional 12-hole injectors to steer fuel away from port walls.

CHASSIS Yamaha keeps the Deltabox name, but ditches the old frame in favour of this gravity cast unit that uses the motor as a stressed member. The subframe is now made from magnesium. The swingarm uses gravity cast, forged and two-piece components and is 15mm shorter. Wheelbase is very aggressively set, at 1,405mm (10mm shorter than before), while rake and trail remain constant, aptly demonstrating where Yamaha want the R1 to work.

ELECTRONICS Yamaha has gone to town here, fitting the R1 with a six-axis Inertial Measurement Unit (IMU). Three gyros are contained within, and these measure pitch, roll and yaw. There are also three G-sensors to detect acceleration in each direction. Analysis happens 125 times a second so the brains can establish its position in relation to lean, slide and pitching rate. If anything is askew, the IMU tells the ECU to either adjust fuel injection volume, ignition timing or throttle valve opening. This also enables the traction control and new Slide Control System to function. The Slide system was stuck on GP bikes two years ago, and allows a preset sideways movement of the rear. There's also a LIF system (wheelie control) and launch control that restricts rpm to under 10,000rpm on quick getaways. Plus you get an adjustable quickshifter and four map Power Mode Selector.

with manners, there's no fist fight at every exit. Best stock up on the tyres, mind, because with the slide control effectively a ticket to pin it at the first hint of an exit, the legacy of the RS10R's efforts are left at least 30 metres out of every turn.

Eastern Creek has changed, a new tight section added, with a section like a second gear version of Maggots and Becketts at Silverstone, where the old R1 would have struggled. The new one turns so quickly, and without the effort you think you'd need. Get too greedy with the throttle and a slide can combine with a turn to sit you up, but that just makes it easier to get into the next corner. There's also a tendency for the electronic steering damper to let a shake develop, but the ingredients here are scuff, scuff, scuff, scuff and that's another section dispatched, the bike's eagerness to pivot is a boon in the sweltering conditions.

And this rhapsody is the merely the £14,999 hors d'oeuvre to the R1M to come.

Shod with the Öhlins ERS Electronic Suspension, the dreamy sessions on the stocker turn into a magic carpet ride on the blinger. And this is the main dynamic change. I can't admit to feeling the weight differences of the added carbon, although adding a tooth on the rear ups the ante somewhat. Oh yeah, I almost forgot the slicks...

Once you're on it, you can't forget the bald Bridgestones. They offer so much grip that you can't help but brake harder, lean more and whack the throttle open in true binary style. The growth to a 200-section rear doesn't affect agility, but boy does the grip affect ability. But you're welcome to stick these on the stocker. The Öhlins, on the other hand, is somewhat of a bigger job.

Because the system is programmed to know what you're doing, it acts in a way conducive



The R1M is already sold out...

LAUNCH



Oh, bubba bubba

I'm Gorgeous George!

R1-M

This special edition gets another kitchen sink thrown at it for good measure.

The big ticket item is the Öhlins Electronic Racing Suspension, that takes data from the IMU to adjust settings while on the run. The system can be run in either automatic or manual mode, with settings within each, and allowing further refinement if desired. The forks have separated damping functions, compression in the left, rebound in the right. You also get the wireless enabled CCU so you can log your ride, including lean angle, GPS and speed. Carbon bodywork is standard, and saves 300g, and the polished tank saves grams in paint, and looks a treat. The M gets to play on 200-section Bridgestone RS10Rs.

Highlights

- ▷ All new R1
- ▷ MotoGP Tech
- ▷ Electronics galore
- ▷ Kayabusa suspension
- ▷ R1M version
- ▷ 197bhp
- ▷ 199kg

TRACK 11

Where's my factory contract?

FAST ROAD 10

We're guessing, but why not?

HOOLIGAN 8

Turn wheelie control off

NEW RIDER 3

Stick it Power Mode 4

DESIRABILITY 9

A Japanese Ducati

TECHNICAL YAMAHA YZF-R1 (R1M)



ENGINE	Type	998cc, I/c, 16v, DOHC inline four
	Bore x Stroke	79.0 x 50.9mm
	Compression	13.0:1
	Fuelling	EFI, 45mm throttle bodies
	Claimed Power	197bhp @ 13,500rpm
	Claimed Torque	112.4Nm @ 11,500rpm

CHASSIS	Frame	Aluminium Deltabox frame
	Front Suspension	43mm USD KYB forks, fully adj. (Ohlins ESA)
	Rear Suspension	KYB monoshock, fully adj. (Ohlins ESA)
	Front Brakes	Four caliper monoblock calipers, 320mm discs, ABS
	Rear Brakes	Single caliper disc, 220mm discs, ABS

DIMENSIONS	Wheelbase	1,405mm
	Seat Height	860mm
	Kerb Weight	199kg (Kerb)
	Fuel Capacity	17 litres

PRICE	Price	£14,999 (£18,499)
	From	Yamaha UK
		www.yamaha-motor.eu 01932 358000

to the conditions. Brake hard, and the front stiffens beautifully, opposing any weight transfer and supporting the bike in die hard fashion. Then comes the feel, the brains of the outfit reverting to supple mannerisms allowing you to exploit line or lean. Then the tyres and tech implores you to stretch the, er, zeros and ones like never before. It makes the bike better, releases all of your potential and leaves you agog at what you can achieve on it.

Practicalities? Er, I don't think the wife will want to go far on the back, but there's civility within. The engine only starts pulling at 4,500rpm in top, so it's not super flexible, but ultimately this is a bike born for the track. Yamaha hasn't stuck two fingers up to road users, but the firm won't be unduly concerned at any criticism levelled at the bike here.

The leap the standard bike has made is astonishing, while the ability of the R1M is staggering. Targeting pure lap times, and enabling the bikes to unlock hidden potential in a rider has created a machine that joins the dots in ways you never thought possible. Filtering the essence of MotoGP's M1 into a package that lets you open the door into the world of Rossi and Lorenzo is now a reality. It donates skill you probably haven't earned, but over time the new R1 will turn you into a better rider – and how many bikes can you say that about?



Verdict 10/10

How high has Yamaha set the bar? This is the second coming of the R1.

+ ELECTRONICS, POWER, GRIP

- WHEELIE CONTROL, LOOKS, CHOOSING WHICH ONE...

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LAUNCH



DUCATI 1299 PANIGALE S

WORDS: BENJAMIN J KUBAS CRONIN PICS: MILAGRO

CAN EXTRA CAPACITY TURN THE WILD AND WAYWARD PANIGALE INTO THE TWIN WE'VE ALWAYS WANTED? NO, THAT JUST MAKES IT FASTER. ALLIED TO THE OTHER CHANGES, HOWEVER...

Four millimetres. That's not a great deal, is it? Think of something that big, or long, and the sheer insignificance of the scale. To a racer, a designer or a mechanic, however, four millimetres may as well be a mile, such is the difference it can make to how a motorcycle feels.

When Ducati announced the new Panigale 1299 in Milan, a small detail was hidden within the wealth of new features – the swingarm pivot has been lowered by four millimetres. Based on feedback from last year's 899 Panigale, Ducati made an accessory for the previous 1199 R to make this adjustment. For the 2015's 1299 Panigale S, this is standard, playing a big part in the new bike's vast and overall improvement. A little goes a long way, clearly.

Ducati has gone to town on the S, and no mistake. Once more there will be three different versions of Panigale, but this is the one it expects to sell the most of, so has received the lion's share of attention. It also gets all the extra little special bits and bobs to help justify the inflated price.

The headline grabbing news from the spec' list is the semi-active 'event based' Smart EC Öhlins electronic suspension. Sachs had stolen a march on the Swedes, having its own version fitted to any bike with active suspension (including the Multistrada). While BMW persevere with Sachs, Ducati makes the move to Öhlins for its first sportsbike solution. The Italians wanted to take their time developing the system.

You can either set it in a 'dynamic' mode, which retains the semi-active reactions within certain set parameters, and then adjust harder or softer within that option. Or you can use it 'fixed', where they act as traditional suzzie units, but that can be adjusted via the dash, much like the last S model Panigale. Using it in this fashion, of course, does also require at least a basic working knowledge of the mystical art of suspension tuning. Fret not, however, Smart EC is here to help. Öhlins' system is a solid step in this direction.

Electronics festoon the Panigale, and also new is the clutchless up/down shifter. Going down it only works under 10,000rpm, but the likelihood of you ever being unable to use it due to that is minimal. It also features the anti-wheelie system from the Superleggera, another attempt to curb the Pani's unruly behaviour. New for 2015 is the option to electronically adjust the Öhlins steering damper too, itself semi-active, and linked to all the preset options in Rain, Sport and Race. Complimenting this is a new ABS braking system (Brembo M50s for the hardware). This is mostly for use on the road, utilising Bosch's mad cornering ABS that makes it almost impossible to crash on the anchors through too hard a squeeze (bar super slippery surfaces, of course...).

We've not even got to the engine yet, which is now so over-square it may as well call itself a nerd. There's also never been a more technologically advanced twin built for a bike either, it's some piece of work. Just the pistons alone have a whopping 116mm diameter. Just imagine one of those hammering up and down beneath your knackers at 12,000 times a minute. If the top piston ever made a break for freedom it'd split you in half and wouldn't stop until it had embedded itself in the moon!

LAUNCH

The dash now has a lean-angle mode



Compression is up on the new motor, and there are a whole other raft of tweaks and redesigns to work with the extra capacity, now at 1,285cc. The claimed power figure is 205bhp at 10,500rpm, at the crank, which should equate to around 185bhp at the rear wheel. I remember us years ago saying our perfect twin would make about 140bhp and weigh around 180kg dry. This makes over 200bhp and weighs in at just 166kg dry. Both are figures that boggle the mind, and you've got to wonder where this rampant advancement will stop, if ever. Allied to that is a massive increase in torque, the 1199's Achilles heel, now standing at a claimed and whopping 144Nm. This completes what in theory should be a major advancement for the model, and Ducati took us to one wonderful proving ground to show off its pride and joy.

Portimao circuit in Portugal is a special place, and one that works a motorcycle extremely hard with crazy undulations, super-fast turns and tight switchbacks. Basically, it has it all. For our first session we were coaxed into using the 1299 on 'Sport' mode, which is the setting for the road. You don't lose power, but it's ever so slightly softened and the suspension is set on the gentle side of firm.

Just pulling out down the long pit lane the changes are immediately obvious. Firstly, the rear is lower. The seat pad has been increased in depth to adjust for the lower rear end, but you can still feel it has dropped and consequently the riding position feels more traditional. Following the lead rider over the



Be afraid, apexes of the world

next couple of laps, the torque increase is palpable to say the least, so much so that I'm barely having to change gear. Soon enough our leader dived into the pits and it was time to get down to business. But within a few laps it's clear that 'Sport' mode and the preset suzbie settings will only get you so far on track. The excess in torque means that there's some squat and a wee bit of bounce exiting corners hard. Likewise, the front is a little unsettled braking hard into turns. The ABS system also has a finite amount of use here, especially considering the superb mechanical grip the 1299's chassis exudes. Yet things do feel far better already, there's almost none of the chassis weirdness the 1199 was famed for.

For the following session it was time to switch to 'Race', and it was also my turn to ride the Ducati

AKRAPOVIC EXHAUST

You've got to feel sorry for Termignoni, so long associated with Ducati, that an Akrapovic now sits here. That said, it's a gorgeous system that drops weight and adds about 10 per cent more power through the range. And it sounds ridiculously awesome on full chat, too.

DUCATI DDA

The Ducati Data Analyser is back, now with GPS functionality, meaning you can play back all your rides and see everything working from throttle to engine, distance, temperatures, and so on. It'll even show you where and by how much the TC saved your arse on the ride graph, too, which strikes us as something you could push and push like a game. Wonder if it also shows where you cartwheel off into the sunset, too?

CORNERING ABS

Maybe not so amazing on track, but on roads it could save your botty in crap conditions. On track when it intruded it meant the front end pinged up a bit, and thus ran you wide a tad. As you won't be doing those kinds of corner speeds or lean angles on the road (will you?), it shouldn't be as problematic and is more likely to be a boon. And it's just more impressive gear on the Panigale, as if there wasn't enough already!

Highlights

- ▷ 1,285cc L-Twin
- ▷ Up/down-shift blipper
- ▷ Semi-active Ohlins
- ▷ Semi-active damper
- ▷ 166.5kg
- ▷ 205bhp (claimed)

- **TRACK** 9
Up with the best now
- **FAST ROAD** 9
Will really shine here
- **HOOLIGAN** 9
With everything switched off
- **NEW RIDER** 6
A Monster for you
- **DESIRABILITY** 10
It deserves an 11...

Now awesome on track, rather than terrifying!





DQS

Ducati joins the party with the Ducati Quick Shift, where you can go up or down the box without using the clutch. It won't work on the downshift under 10,000rpm. The system is very slick and works really well, effectively hiding any notches the gearbox may have, or not, we just don't know now!

IMU

If you didn't already know, Inertial Measurement Units are all the rage these days and are here to stay. They help calculate everything to aid the traction-control, and so on, in this case by measuring acceleration in relation to three separate axis, thereby working out the bike's roll and pitch. It means everything can work quicker, smarter and with more precision. What are you doing, Dave?

The Ducati Performance kitted bike is stunning...

DWC

The Ducati Wheelie Control is most welcome on track, especially as it doesn't seem to affect drive too much and barely feels like it curbs the power on the lower settings. Only stupid undulations can fool it, but even then it works out what's going on a hell of a lot faster than you can. A setting of '2' should suffice anyone really.

EBC

Ducati's Engine Brake Control is essential for decent corner entry on track with modern bikes. We just hope it fares better than the old one did on a freezing cold and wet roundabout in January! Otherwise, knocking the EBC up or down has a marked effect on how you can fly into a turn; it's most impressive, even speeding up the steering into turn one at Portimao. Turn it up too high and you can see a small return of the over-steer the last bike was infamous for. But not too much to worry about.

DTC

Ducati's Traction Control gets another upgrade with the new bike, though still features eight-levels of adjustment. The S version now gets buttons on the left-hand bar though, much like Aprilia's RSV4, from which you can adjust it, or many of the other electronic controls, on the fly without having to stop or take your hand off the bars.

ÖHLINS SMART EC

Set the bike in any of the modes, and you can then go deeper and stiffen the suspension up, or soften it off, as you like within those preset parameters. It's very cool stuff, and saves you from taking a degree in suspension tuning, too. It's in the working action where the Öhlins shines though, setting the new standard with lecky suspension. We suspect it may not give the same magic-carpet ride as the BMW's Sachs, but on track it's the dog's dangles.

Performance kitted machine with a full Akrapovic system installed. In this track setting the TC is knocked off a bit, as is the anti-wheelie and the forks and shock firm up to suit. It takes just three laps to realise I'm having the time of my life, and that the 1299 is a revelation compared to its older sibling. Yes, the noise did add a bit to the drama, but it's the innate skills honed into the 1299's architecture that delights.

I was lucky enough six months earlier to have done at least a hundred laps on an 1199 S here at Portimao under similar, yet warmer, conditions and had identical on-board video laps to compare against one another. As such, I was able to clearly analyse the differences between the pair, and where the 1299 trumped the outgoing machine. Pretty much everywhere, as it would turn out...

Firstly, the 1299 gains far more speed down the straight, to the tune of an extra 5mph. That's the increased power in play there, plus the more aerodynamic and taller screen as standard. As the track drops approaching turn one, now you let off the gas and immediately bang down three gears without touching the clutch. This allows more time to concentrate on getting corner entry right, none of your focus is divided and the down-shift blipper is slick in execution, too. In 'Race' the cornering ABS is deactivated. You can switch it back on via the custom settings, but when you're up to a certain pace it's best left off.

The brakes are a marvel of power and feel

anyway, there's enough feedback to accurately anchor just how you want every time, and into turn one the information being transmitted through the lever and front end is so tangible I may as well be the tyre itself. Steering is now also blissfully accurate, rather than the 'hang it and hope' under-steer the 1199 seemingly insisted upon.

Slicing across the rumble-strip you get back on the gas early and accelerate hard to the next right-hand kink. On the 1199 you'd have to hold the gas steady for this, especially as there's a big lump that drops the bike down six inches which would unsettle it. Not so here. You ease off the gas just a fraction, the chassis remaining far more composed. I ended up entering the next right-hand hairpin at least 10mph faster than I'd ever managed on the old bike.

Now comes a tricky part, a blind uphill left-hand bend that opens out onto a straight. Previously you'd have no choice but to keep the 1199 in second-gear, which meant an awkward shift up while still at an angle on exit. Now you can shift straight to third and drive up and over the turn, keeping the throttle just ahead of grip and TC limits. Actually, for the first few laps at speed I was running wide on exit and past the rumble strips purely because of the extra torque the 1299 has. It was punching out so much harder it needed a wider entry to make the best use of the torque on exit. The new midrange bulge has effectively bridged the gap between very

little and utter insanity, which the previous engine delivered. Oh, it's still a raving maniac past this bulge, revving hard, fast and trying to pull your arms off. But getting to that point is now sublime, the thrust intoxicating, yet more linear.

The next downhill left-hand hairpin is where the Öhlins really shined. There's a huge bump just as you approach full lean. It unsettled the old bike, and any Sachs-shod BMWs we've ridden there would lose feeling as the electronics changed the suspension when it hit it. Because the Öhlins reacts, rather than constantly adjusts, it meant it felt completely natural there and negated the bump's usual effect, which was to make a bike go wide. The 1299 remained planted and on course.

Get back on the gas and the rear stiffens slightly, relaxing as you pitch upright and pile on the coals. The left hand kink that follows can now be taken in fourth rather than third, and where the next right hand kink would have the 1199 tying itself into knots in preparation for it, the 1299 just sailed through without any unwanted interference. Then it was down to second gear for the hill, and the big drop-off. Drive hard in second-gear, the front pawing the air and controlled by the DWC. A shift to third sees the same as you approach the summit. Snick up into fourth gear, add full gas and as the world drops away the front wheel stays just a few feet off the ground. ■

» The landing is sublimely controllable, and then it's on to its side for the roasting hot left-hand kink. On the old bike it was fourth gear, averaging around 120mph. On the 1299 it's fourth or fifth gear, touching on 130mph at 55 degrees of lean. Oh, didn't I say? The TFT dash on the Panigale can now be switched to a lean-angle display. That's pretty damn cool as well as being great banter fodder.

The rest of the lap is the same kind of deal, taking yards off the old bike at every turn, but all the while being more composed. And it's the final, daunting corner that really impresses. The stability of this bike is unbelievable. Kneedown at 130mph, hammer the gasser and it drifts wide on the exit as we approach the hill to the start/finish line. The 1199 would wheelie at 145mph here and you'd need to hold the throttle to not flip it. The 1299 blasts over there lifting the front two feet high at 150mph, and lands a hundred yards later pushing 160, hammering on to nearly 180mph before braking for turn one. It doesn't stop charging, the anti-wheelie is just brilliant.

As is the entire bike, really. The sophistication of the developments give you more time to just ride it. The electronics all work sublimely and have enough adjustment to tailor it specifically to your needs. And the chassis now feels natural, more traditional and easier to handle, mostly because of those four little millimetres.

More telling, was that when I got off I wasn't exhausted, aching, or thankful to still be alive which was a regular occurrence on the old machine. Riding one hard is more like a classical fencing duel now, rather than a wrestling match with an enraged grizzly bear. Where Ducati has really scored is that you still know you've just had an amazing experience. None of the delight, wonder or aggressive attitude has been curbed enough to make it sterile. Now more people can get more from it, with far less effort, and that's got to be a good thing.

Don't get me wrong, that final five-percent will still take a racer to make it work. You'll probably be able to ride the BMW, Aprilia RSV4 or new R1 slightly faster, with far less effort, but I'm not sure any of those can deliver the pure

essence the 1299 is able to emit. What is certain is that the Panigale is now bang in the ball park with its rivals, and none of them come close to the sexiness the 1299 drips in abundance. No longer is it the masochist's ride, where you put up with the oddball antics and attitude out of some kind of sadistic duty. I ran an 1199 for the past two years, know the old bike intimately, and am astonished at how much better the new bike is.

I'm also giving the new bike a maximum score. The BMW may still lap faster, the RSV4 may still handle better and other rivals are much cheaper. Yet none of them, I believe, provide the full package as the 1299 S does. From looks and design to electronics, handling, power and most of all, the experience. That's a tough combination to beat.

I got so caught up in riding the bike as hard as I could, relishing its newly found skills that I completely forgot to ham it up a bit for the cameras. So absorbed was I in the bike and the track, that I forgot about everything else apart from learning exactly what this machine was capable of, drowning in the aural rise and fall as those two huge pistons drove her on. It's that kind of intense involvement that makes the 1299 Panigale S worth every single penny of its asking price, which given it is 20 grand is quite the achievement! **EB**

TECHNICAL DUCATI 1299 PANIGALE S



ENGINE	Type	1,285cc, 8v, liquid-cooled, L-Twin
	Bore x Stroke	116 x 60.8mm
	Compression	12.6:1
	Fuelling	RBW fuel-injection
	Claimed Power	205bhp @ 10,500rpm
CHASSIS	Claimed Torque	144.6Nm @ 8,750rpm
	Frame	Monocoque aluminium
	Front Suspension	43mm semi-active USD Öhlins fork
	Rear Suspension	Öhlins monoshock, semi-active
	Front Brakes	Four-piston calipers, 330mm discs, ABS
DIMENSIONS	Rear Brakes	Two-piston caliper, 245mm disc, ABS
	Wheelbase	1,437mm
	Seat Height	830mm
	Dry Weight	166.5kg
	Fuel Capacity	17L
PRICE	Price	£20,795
	From	www.ducatiuk.com

ENGINE The 1299 engine is a super-over-square engine, utilizing 'box in box' 116mm diameter pistons for the 116mm diameter bore, with a 60.8mm stroke. It's an L-Twin, meaning that the cylinders sit at 90° to one another. It's rolled back by 21 degrees so it can be placed further forward for improved weight distribution. Crankcases are die-cast and incorporate a water-jacket around the rods that affix the cylinder head directly onto the cases. Intake valves are 46.8mm and exhaust valves are 38.2mm, the same as the 1199. The engine is fed by ride-by-wire fuel-injection, in tandem with the inertial measurement unit (IMU) and ECU which controls the various riding modes, the DTC, DQS, DES, DWC, EBC and a partridge in a pear tree.

CHASSIS Frame-wise, erm, there isn't one. Well, the engine is the chassis with a small aluminium extension attached to the top cylinder to form the headstock. The single-sided swingarm bolts directly to the engine too, while the wheels are light-weight forged aluminium Marchesini items. Öhlins provides trick suspension front and rear with its Smart EC semi-active 'event-based' kit. Hardware-wise, 43mm NIX forks compliment a TTX36 shock. They also supply the semi-active Smart EC steering damper, too. Brembo M50 calipers bite huge 330mm discs, also featuring ABS and Bosch's 'cornering ABS' system. Tyres are the Pirelli SuperCorsa SP, though now the bike can be calibrated to run any tyre without affecting the electronics. At bloody last!

Verdict 10/10

It may not be the fastest, or sharpest, but as a package it'll be very hard to beat. Ride one, and be blown away with it. We were...

- ✦ ENGINE, ELECTRONICS, HANDLING...
- ✦ UIM, ERM, PRICE? STILL HARD AS NAILS

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scramblerducati.com

Image taken on closed road.

WORDS: ROOTSY PICS: BMW

BMW F 800 R

From stunter to shopper, the old F 800 R did the lot. But what about the new one? Rootsy went to sunny Spain to find out...

We love it when an otherwise uptight bike loses its utilitarian shackles and cuts loose, like when world stunt champ Chris Pfeiffer rips up a car park on an F 800 R. It's the one bike in BMW's burgeoning range that you associate the German wheelie gott with, letting you think if he can do it on that bike then so can I.

Wholeheartedly sensible in conception, the remit of the original F 800 R (launched in 2009) was broader than being a sole stunt tool. Its abilities were broad, the main offering being as gentle an introduction into the Bavarian range as possible. But stick a Red Bull swigging stunt jockey on it and the bike transforms from an earnest commuter into an extension of

Pfeiffer's own limbs, aptly demonstrating the depth and breadth of the F 800 R's abilities.

But it looked a bit funny, didn't it. Those wacky headlights weren't everyone's cuppa, the package was all a bit basic and the only thing pushing the boundaries was Pfeiffer's athleticism and imagination. Criticism of the bike wasn't damning, but praise was hardly lavish, either. The competition was hotting up, too. Yamaha's MT machines, both the 07 and the 09, added to the phalanx of rivals that cast the BMW somewhat in the shadows.

BMW's answer to stalling sales has culminated in the 2015 bike. Addressing the looks, the ergonomics and introducing techno baubles to the package have produced a gentle evolution of the bike, intended to make it more visually appealing and upping the fun levels all the while.

The Bender from Futurama headlight has been consigned to history, replaced by a unit that now conforms to what BMW designers think the public want. It's said to work better at night, too. But I liked the old one, and think the new one looks at best a bit like the Suzuki B-King's light, at worst the Inazuma...

Other design touches include fresh cowls and covers, adding a frisson of aggression in an otherwise friendly package.

Replacing the old RWU forks and conventionally mounted brake calipers is the front end off the new R 1200 R and a new set of lighter wheels. The forks are undjustable, but fashionably upside down, while the Brembo brakes are now radial mount jobbies. The bikes we rode were also equipped with BMW's entry level ESA system, that just changes the rear's rebound settings electronically according to three modes – sport, normal and comfort. That's not the only concession to modernity, with these bikes also fitted with the ASC traction control system. As ever with BMW, the base bike is a blank canvas for you to add these extras to. Remapping has found an extra 3bhp, and that's the new bike for you. So what's it like?

Very capable, if tearing around the hills of Almeria for 200 miles was anything to go by. The launch ramped up speed and challenges as the day progressed, so an easy ride along the coast highlighted how simple the F 800 R is to ride. The clutch has been made easier to operate, and in conjunction with a tooth coming off the front sprocket, drive is clean and consistent. The parallel twin motor doesn't shake its indignance at low speeds in the wrong gear, rather offer enough pull at

low revs to satisfy the laziest of riders.

The revised ergonomics work, too. Making the bars straighter and offering more legroom makes the bike more intuitive than before, and its balance is excellent. BMW offers an A2 version of the F 800 R, and what with a decent turning circle it'll make mincemeat of any coned configuration.

So far, so good. But surely the escape from the coast to the hills would see the 798cc parallel twin suffer, especially as there's only 8,500 revs and a claimed 90bhp to play with. Well, what the motor lacks in character it makes up for in sincere enthusiasm. It offers linear power delivery, with only a small boost at around 6,000rpm, so there's plenty of flexibility on offer. The supposedly small rev range, however, actually incorporates plenty of shove. You're not feeding it gears constantly, rather in the confined environment of Spain's open spaces it can push you out of a corner at 3,000rpm and get you to the next 5,000 revs later without swapping ratios.

While the extra 3bhp is not really noticeable, the improvements made to the bike's suspension are stark. The front now offers plenty of support, and though the forks are unadjustable on economic grounds, the settings mean the front doesn't capitulate at the first sign of a cornering encounter. Shod with Metzeler Z8 Interact tyres, it was only at piss-taking levels of lean where the communication with the road **»**



Pfeiffer stylee!

BMW F 800 R



The F-in F 800 R stands for fun...

turned down into the corridor of uncertainty.

The rear's ESA also has a palpable effect, although I only felt it jumping from Sport to Comfort, not noticing the single step to or from Normal. The F 800 R's electronics didn't intervene at any point, with the ASC traction aid and ABS unemployed other than viciously cajoling it into action. The TC can be turned off on the hoof to allow wheelies, but you'll have to ask Pfiffer how to turn the ABS off, as it's on constantly.

The ride soon turned into a dangerous riding competition, with our guide, mounted on a K1600, trying desperately to make us grow small in his mirrors. But for all the might of the six cylinder bike, the plucky parallel stuck to its twin pipes. We slipped onto the motorway for a few miles, where it climbed to 120mph with ease, before settling on a comfortable 100mph cruising speed, with no notable vibes appearing between 60 and 120mph thanks to the additional conrod to balance the motor. For a few miles I flicked through the controls, noting that the bike had done 50mpg so far – impressively economical on such a throttle heavy journey. I then thought that the analogue speedo display was hard to read, jumping as it did by 20kph increments, making holding a constant speed through, say, average speed cameras difficult. Hardly the most



German bike plus Spanish roads equals one great day...

damning criticism of a machine...

So the bike's better, more controlled with extra power and a less divisive look. But in many ways it sits in a no man's land of middleweight naked, with no discernable compulsion to buy it over its rivals. One group of rivals are more powerful, sportier and packed with character (MT-09, Street Triple, Z800) while in the other camp the competition is cheaper, friendlier and simpler (MT-07, Er-

6F, SV650). Given it's the introduction to the rest of the range, BMW had to err on the side of manners rather than mayhem, although if you go looking for trouble the F 800 R is more than capable of finding it; just ask Pfeiffer...

Verdict 7/10

Had a blast on it, and it didn't put a foot wrong...

+ MANNERS, NEW FRONT END, ECONOMY

- NEW HEADLIGHT, EXTRA PRICE FOR THE TOYS

Highlights

- ▷ New front end
- ▷ Optional ESA
- ▷ Few more horses
- ▷ Revised ergonomics
- ▷ 90bhp
- ▷ 202kg

TRACK 5

Not cut out for it

FAST ROAD 7

The tighter the better

HOOLIGAN 7

It's Pfeiffer's choice

NEW RIDER 8

Great option

DESIRABILITY 6

Not keen on new looks

ENGINE The liquid cooled 798cc parallel twin engine received no significant changes, although output is up by 3bhp through new mapping (a 48bhp option is a free downgrade for A2 customers). Torque remains constant at 86Nm. As well as making the gearing shorter, via a tooth dropped on the front sprocket, internal ratios have also been modified, with a new first and second gear. The clutch has been made to feel lighter at the lever, a nod to women that found it hard to engage. The exhaust is the same as on the old bike, but the optional extra Akrapovic pipe adds bark, bite and lops 1.7 kilos off.

CHASSIS The frame and swingarm components have not changed, but some of the bits added to them have. New aluminium handlebars offer a more relaxed stance on the bike, while the footpegs have been relocated 10mm further forward and 10mm lower. Seat height has also been reduced by 10mm to 790mm (as well as other seat options being available). The R 1200 R's suspension is now used, so an USD unit replaces the old RWU forks. The rear shock (with or without ESA) has adjustment for rebound and preload. New Brembo radial mount calipers have a two channel ABS system as standard.

TECHNICAL 2015 BMW F 800 R



ENGINE	Type	798cc, I/c, 8v, DOHC, inline twin
	Bore x Stroke	82 x 75.6mm
	Compression	12.0:1
	Fuelling	EFI, 46mm throttle valve
	Claimed Power	90bhp @ 8,000rpm
CHASSIS	Claimed Torque	86Nm @ 5,800rpm
	Frame	Aluminium alloy perimeter frame
	Front Suspension	43mm USD fork, unadjustable
	Rear Suspension	Monoshock, rebound and preload adjustable
	Front Brakes	Four piston Brembo calipers, 320mm discs, ABS
DIMENSIONS	Rear Brakes	Single piston caliper, 265mm disc, ABS
	Wheelbase	1,526mm
	Seat Height	790mm (770/820mm options)
	Kerb Weight	202kg (kerb)
	Fuel Capacity	15 litres
PRICE	Price	From £7,595
	From	BMW UK www.bmw-motorrad.co.uk



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WORDS: FAGAN
 PICS: 'LORD' DOM ROMNEY

MV AGUSTA BRUTALE 800 RR

WHEN ONE R ISN'T ENOUGH, MV AGUSTA BUSTS OUT
 A SECOND AND ADDS IT TO ITS NAKED BRUISER...

Usually, writing about the same manufacturer's bikes over a short period isn't an issue. But when it comes to testing MV Agusta's fleet of metallic glamour and its ethos of basing most of its range on very similar engine and chassis combos, testing criteria is trickier to nail. It's clear that my A-game is needed here.

Whether or not the recent AMG coalition and big-buck investment will manifest into significant sales remains to be seen, but the new Brutale 800RR should kick things off nicely, especially if you're a bit of a tart. MV has certainly added some spice to the range with the RR, but first off, what is it? It's a unique, mischievous naked bike with immense sporting pedigree, and a Gucci upgrade over the stock Brutale 800; plus snazzy lightweight

wheels, more power and a feast of electronica adding to the drool inducing looks.


Over previous winters, riding any Brutale could be considered as a form of self-harming. Not any more – the 800RR has been wiped from Social Services' danger list, yet maintains MV's inherent involvement. Despite the RR suffix and sportier attitude, a culmination of the ride-by-wire's refinement and a delicious throttle, topped off by a more accommodating chassis, has widened the Brutale's usability. Dare we say it; it's less brutal.

I could stare at this bike all day long – just like any (actually, most) MVs. The recent improvements to build quality at the Varese factory no longer leaves you frustrated, instead leaving you stiff or moist depending on gender.

From an ergonomic perspective, the 800RR

is comfier than any other Brutale. There aren't as many naughty bits snagging limbs or clothing. The riding position is still fairly aggressive; the front wheel convenes under your nose in archetypal MV fashion, and there's a real sense of control with the, erm, controls. You feel you can achieve on this.

The problem with the Brutale isn't its looks. It isn't the handling. And it certainly isn't the motor, nor the electronics. It's keeping your licence clean and staying out of prison. When you're presented with such a hysterical throttle so eager to be pinned to the stop, and a playmate like the MV's 798cc motor's insistence on redline abuse, it's impossible not to ride like a complete twat, your honour.

It's also impossible to heap enough superlatives on the triple, particularly the RR's 



XL on the RR

state of tune. A claimed extra 20bhp over the stock Brutale (probably half of that on the botty and Dynojet dynos) adds another dose of midrange mayhem, equating to third gear wheelies over any excuse for a crest. The first few gears are pure entertainment wherever you are, and while it still takes a while to gain momentum at the very bottom of the revs, the midrange hit and howl make up for it. It's also discernably smooth and easy to pootle on.

But the sound, the noise, the character; it all points to angry. I reckon it'll be mechanically impossible for an engine to spin (internally) any quicker without self-implosion. That now orthodox MV counter-rotating crankshaft gives an idiosyncratic take on the sexy tri-pot soundtrack. It's not broken, it's just angry – the Brutale makes a Street Triple feel like a castrated, slightly camp tomatcat in comparison.

And then we've got the electronic onslaught. Regulars will know how much we love the auto-blipper (ensuring the clutch is redundant during downshifts) as well as the quickshifter – the pair do an ace job of masking any aimless shifting. I'm sure when sliced bread was released to an unsuspecting public everyone gaily jumped around like school kids for a while until the novelty wore off. The auto-blipper? It's like Hovis laced with crack, meaning you'll be riding round looking for excuses to change gear.

Personally, I'm not a fan of variable engine maps, although the latest crop of MVs warrant the usually pointless technology with distinctively different executions. Ultimately, the throttle is the primary point of engageable contact, so why not get it bang-on and nail personal preference? It's the same for the rest of the electronics' adjustability, with a minefield of parameters; everything from rev-limiter to engine braking, traction control to throttle sensitivity can be adjusted – although it has to be said MV needs to work on its switchgear and toggle/button options before someone goes postal in frustration.

The only other slight negative to the 800RR (aside from its price), is the fact it takes a



Haysi Fantasyze!

while to get accustomed to its manners. It's not as dynamically faultless, or as fluid, or as easy to simply jump on and ride as the Street Triple – its obvious counterpart. Dodgy conditions don't suit the MV's fickle requests, and while the inherent stiffness from the steel trellis/ally plates lend the chassis receptive sharpness and feedback, it's certainly not as easy to spank as less complex rivals.

Then again, feed it dry Tarmac and the Brutale starts to make perfect sense, reading the road with precision and allowing the mechanical grip to flourish. Although it also feels slightly more rear biased, the RR has lost none of its front-end dexterity and there's a real lightness and flickability to its stance on the hoof, though never too unwieldy.

According to MV, the 800 RR's Marzocchi fork stanchions are aluminium – a world first – saving 1.5kg, and while I'm not going to sit here and wax lyrical about the spec sheet, the forks do have an overwhelming plushness that I've never previously experienced on an MV, and copes well with anything UK roads offer. The skittish, lively, dancing-across-the-road of yesteryear has vanished, though the yoke-mounted steering damper is an aesthetically



Does a naked bike get any better looking than this?

pleasing security measure.

Corner entry is as adept as ever, ably stopped by top-shelf Brembo paraphernalia and a front-end on a laser-guided mission. This RLM (Rear Lift Mitigation) braking aid that prevents unwanted endos, as with many other bikes with the system fitted, is a bit of a safety gimmick, and has yet to find tangible benefits to riding with the system functioning. At least it's all turn offable.

The last time I looked, the Euro wasn't looking too rosy against the pound, meaning seafront apartments on the outskirts of Benidorm are going for the same money as a Brutale 800 RR. Granted, it's brimming with blue-chip componentry and MV's promise never to resort to making budget machinery is scant consolation regarding its price – but we'd want a little more bang for our bucks.

Pre performance and smiles-per-pound is a different story. While big, full-fat supernakeds can be a little intimidating on UK roads and suffer on circuit, and cheaper middleweight nakedos often leave you cold, MV has got the blend of power and control nailed with the Brutale 800RR. This Italian hotty is not only a go-er, it revels as being a show-er, too. **EB**



Highlights

- ▷ Raa-Raa version
- ▷ Auto-blipper
- ▷ Adjustable everything
- ▷ Aluminium fork
- ▷ 168kg
- ▷ 120bhp
- ▷ £11,599

TRACK 7

We're guessing – and hoping

FAST ROAD 9

Born from plush front

HOOLIGAN 8

The front's never down

NEW RIDER 3

Still lairy despite electronics

DESIRABILITY 9

It's like Viagra on two wheels



Brutale by name,
brutal by nature

TECHNICAL MV AGUSTA BRUTALE 800 RR

ENGINE	Type	798cc, 12v, DOHV, inline-triple
	Bore x Stroke	79 x 54.3mm
	Compression	13.3:1
	Fuelling	Mikuni RBW, EFI
	Tested Power	120bhp @ 12,200rpm
	Tested Torque	76Nm @ 10,500rpm
CHASSIS	Frame	ALS tubular steel
	Front Suspension	Marzocchi 43mm fork, fully adj
	Rear Suspension	Sachs monoshock, fully adj
	Front Brake	Brembo four-piston calipers, 320mm discs
	Rear Brake	Brembo two-piston caliper, 220mm disc
DIMENSIONS	Wheelbase	1,380mm
	Seat Height	810mm
	Dry weight	168kg
	Fuel Capacity	16.6L
PRICE	Price	£11,599
	From	www.hampshiremvagusta.co.uk

Verdict

9/10

What a riot. Lush to look at, ace to ride hard

- + IT'S AN MV 800, ELECTRONICS, FUN-FACTOR, GUCCI BITS
- PRICE, CAN BE FICKLE, TOGGLE BUTTONS

BMW S 1000 RR Sport

Having performed perfectly on a sunny Spanish circuit, the 2015 BMW S 1000 RR debuts on British soil – said soil covering much of the UK's roads at the minute...

I'm pretty confident that on this cold day in February I'm on the most potent production bike in the land. Astride the new 2015 version of BMW's outrageous S 1000 RR, the German bike has no contemporary rivals; the Yamaha YZF-R1 is a week away from its Australian launch, Ducati's 1299 Panigale has yet to board the boat to the UK, and we've yet to hear about when Aprilia will let us loose on the new RSV4. So unless there's someone braving the weather (and salt laden roads) on a secretly blue-printed Kawasaki ZX-10R, I'm in a company of one.

And I don't blame you for keeping your powder dry until you've scoffed your Easter eggs, because it's brassic – quite literally freezing cold. A world away from its launch at Monte Blanco in Spain, the new Beemer is now supposed to impress in temperatures 25-degrees lower and on roads much more unkempt than the surface found at the juicy Seville track. The original plan was to take the bike to the first UK trackday of the year, but we had second thoughts knowing what the bike does on track already – we're not going to add to our knowledge here. Of more relevance is the Beemer's behaviour on the road and in the dyno room. And that's why after the bike impressively strutted its stuff on the JHS Racing dyno (see box), I'm now on the A39, keeping the Bristol Channel on my right and heading as far west as I can.

Although I missed BMW's indoctrination as to the benefits of all the new elements of the bike at the launch, it's still clear to feel that this is very much a new machine. And that feeling is coming largely due to the addition of the £240 heated grips, their warmth allowing me to feel what the bike's doing. And this is made more relevant with one of the big ticket changes; the DDC electronic suspension (a very reasonable £605 addition). True, the high tech damping adjustment of the DDC system is aided by the low tech geometry changes, but the result is a bike that enables the exploration of every ounce of grip that the Pirellis can get hold of. 🏍️

WORDS: ROOTSY
PICS: THE GAWLER





And boy does the rubber have its work cut out trying to transfer all 186bhp to the Tarmac. At low speed it's a wolf in sheep's clothing, politely navigating through traffic with only its gruff bark from the EBR-like exhaust hinting at the potential within. But make a break for it out of town and that first hit of acceleration requires your brain to be reprogrammed. If it's in race or slick mode it still wants to fire upwards in third gear, derisively ignoring any need for the clutch and disregarding the lower swingarm pivot point and longer swingarm. Apply a whiff of it and it'll wheelie at 100mph in third. Warning – this product may contain nuts.

This is all born from the torque within, and it's the mountain of shove that goes with any application of throttle that makes this new S 1000 RR so impressive. Thanks to the modified head and lighter intake valves what used to be called the low-end is now where the action starts, so there's plenty of pull from 4,000rpm. Then back to the conventional midrange zone and the speedo numbers struggle to keep up. You expect this while pinging through the gears, but if you leave the bike in top at 50mph it'll execute an overtake quicker than Henry VIII got rid of a spouse. This thing is an utter ripsnorter, whatever the mode. I usually deride every rain mode going, but even in its most castrated status the Beemer still spat out 140mph and threatened to rip up the road beneath, albeit with mild manners. The engine's electronics do stymie things over bumpy back routes where it stutters over the bumps, but it's doing nothing it's not intended to. As an aside, the quickshifter is a giant leap forward; trick and slick.



That can is no looker...

No upgrade with the calipers...

The chink in the BMW's armour was always feeling at the edge. We're talking circuit edge, not salt laden roads in February. But even here the advances in the RR's aptitude are palpable. The lighter exhaust is not the noticeable part, rather the switch to the HP wheels causing renewed enthusiasm for cornering. Knowing that the TC will mop up the worst of winter, the focus is on you to feel the communication from the front, the home of happiness. This Sport version is festooned with the sexy Sachs techno suzzies from the HP4, thus the BMW boasts brilliant balance and adapts imperceptibly according to its environment. It's hell out there, but the BMW is able to dance between the potholes, dodge the tractor trails and eke out what grip there is without you resorting to Tamazepam on a ride. Rain and Sport are on the soft side, but that's what you'd expect. If it can feel confident and reassuring through the grit and grime (even on Supercorsas) then once surfaces clean up and get warm the story is going to be epic.



Start as you mean to go on...



There's a lot going on here...

If you're looking for a weakness, you'll struggle to find one. Ergonomically and economically sound, it returns respectable figures almost regardless of its current state of caning. There's enough room on board not to get too claustrophobic, the mirrors are spot on and the little extras (and they are extras) like the cruise control (£395) and heated grips (£240) are a boon. Launch control and the pitlane limiter were hard to find, but that's only a familiarisation process. It's only when you start looking for that extra ounce of specialness, the burning desire to do anything to own one, the tear inducing beauty of a bike that's been built by artists that the BMW's shine starts to fall into the

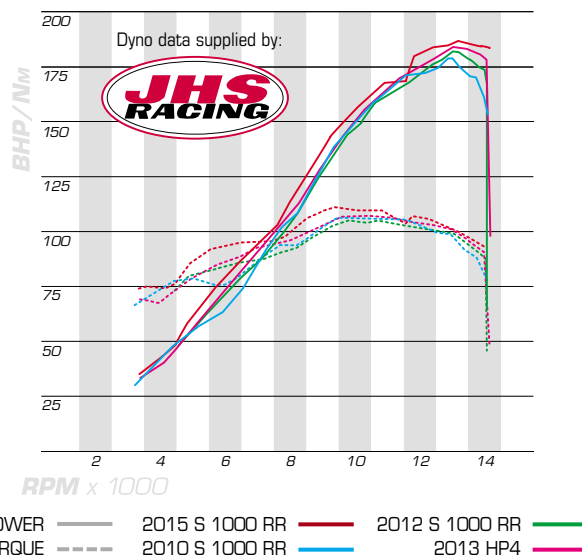
Verdict 9.9/10

Dynamically stunning, the BMW is only let down by its non-Italian looks. An amazing road bike.

- + DDC SUSPENSION, MOTOR, ELECTRONICS
- OPTIONAL EXTRAS, LOOKS, EBR EXHAUST



POWER AND TORQUE



shadows. But as a dynamic package, it's currently peerless.

With more power than an HP4, high-tech suspension solutions, an array of other electronics and the guile to circumnavigate winter, the S 1000 RR is going to spring into the rest of the year. Impressing at such an early stage in the season builds upon its talent demonstrated at its launch, and the BMW has now put clear ground between it and anything Japan can muster. New Italian rivals will prove a sterner challenge, but on the evidence presented so far only something stellar will suffice...

DYNO-MITE

No new bike can escape the beady eye of James Holland and his Dynojet dynamometer. Time to strap it and braap it!

"I'm not a big fan of BMWs, they're a pain to work on. There are things like the switchgear being held on by tiny screws, getting the tank up needs more work than needs to, that sort of stuff. The engine mountings use a collar with a taper, and if you're taking it out you'll struggle to get it back in the same position again. The motor's always been good though, but there's nothing radical about it, like they don't run the camchain directly off the crankshaft so its not getting any undue force from the camchain – things like that free up horsepower.

like changing gear when they're on their ear.

But there's no arguing about what it does on the dyno. For a start, they've really improved the quickshifter's action. It's like punching a pillow the way they've softened it up. I'm thinking they're just cutting two cylinders just to unload it, creating a soft shift. It doesn't even make the chain go slack. Very nice indeed. The fly-by-wire feels funny, I'm not sure what's going on there, and I can feel the glitch at around 11,500rpm. I wonder if that's where the secondary injectors chime in, but you can certainly feel it. It tapers off beforehand, so that's 500 revs that you're suffering. It's knocking the torque out, too. It's not just in the race mode, because it happens in slick mode too. If you could get rid of that dip, then you'd get more out of it at peak because the motor is losing its momentum. I'm guessing that there are electronics causing that little problem, some sort of restriction. But after this the power keeps on going. That is good. Proper good, ja! 110Nm is a lot of torque for an inline four litre bike, and they've never been that torquey. Nearly 190 horses on this dyno is a big figure. The first one we had put out 179bhp, so this is a big improvement on that. The second generation didn't feel that much had changed on it, but you can tell BMW has got it act together with this one. It's proper!"

The rocker arrangement at the top means you don't have to use as big camshafts – it's all solid stuff. Strangely, I'm hearing that there are normal RRs and then ones that use a cassette gearbox. The gearbox was also a weak point with racers using the shift assist system where they don't

Time for the dyno to be worried?



TECHNICAL BMW S 1000 RR SPORT

ENGINE	Type	999cc, I/c, DOHC, inline four
	Bore x Stroke	80 x 49.7mm
	Compression	13.0:1
	Fuelling	BMS-KP EFI, 48mm throttle bodies
	Claimed Power	186bhp @ 13,200rpm
CHASSIS	Claimed Torque	110Nm @ 9,500rpm
	Frame	Aluminium Bridge frame
	Front Suspension	46mm Sachs forks, fully adj. DDC
	Rear Suspension	Sachs monoshock, fully adj. DDC
	Front Brakes	Four piston radial Brembo calipers, 320mm discs, ABS
DIMENSIONS	Rear Brakes	Single piston caliper, 220mm disc, ABS
	Wheelbase	1,438mm
	Seat Height	815mm
	Kerb Weight	204kg
	Fuel Capacity	17.5 litre
PRICE	Price	£14,760
	From	www.bmw-motorrad.co.uk

SUZUKI GSX-R750

It's 30 years young, been ignored for too long, and the sun is setting on the Suzuki GSX-R750's long reign. But what a ride it's been...

WORDS: FAGAN PICS: JONNY GAWLER, FB ARCHIVE

It's been loitering around longer than Dot Cotton, been bedroom wall fodder for hoards of teenagers, and in its time has housed more bums than Henman Hill. Yup, we're talking about the Suzuki GSX-R750. It changed the game back in 1985 and celebrates its 30th birthday in 2015, albeit with a slightly more modest impact on the motorcycle world in its current guise. Happy birthday to you...

People forget (including Suzuki, by the sound of it) that the GSX-R400 was actually born in 1984, thus making it the 31st anniversary of the marque, but there aren't many sportsbikes with the rich history of the 750 – and certainly not the long lost GSX-R400. So it's the 750 that we celebrate today. There's a reason why Suzuki has

persevered with the 750. Thanks to minimal tweaks and mirroring development and updates with its siblings in the latter years, the middleweight hasn't broken the Suzuki bank, yet still sells in respectable numbers. True, the race on Sunday, sell on Monday ethos has slowly diminished, and you don't have to buy a 1000cc bike just because you adore a certain racer, or your missus wants a piece of him. Likewise, 600s undoubtedly aren't everyone's cuppa. That's why the GSX-R750 is the perfect middleman.

11,110 days have passed since its inception (I should have waited a day...) and the 750 ignited over a million GSX-Rs leaving the Suzuki factory. A million! Like anything, it's had its ups and downs, and the first

prominent up was obviously the launch in '85. Katanas, GPZs and a few Hondas were the first banging four-strokes, joining the popular (and much lighter) two-stroke brigade, but the GSX-R was the first pukka, focused sportsbike with a multi-track mind.

But the original Gixer was hardly dripping with cutting-edge technology. While Yamaha's FZ750 used a liquid-cooled, five-valve engine slanted in the frame, the GSX-R's lump was air/oil-cooled, but it still managed to blow the back doors off everyone that rode it.

Like many of us, the 750 struggled with its weight over the years and the early-to-mid 90s was a prime example. It was underpowered and tipped the scales at way over 200kg. The shellsuit graphics were a bit keen, and you



Colours weren't always a strong point...



» could lose yourself in the multitude of suspension settings. Get one set right and you could well find yourself burned at the stake by the pagans. So it was the likes of Kawasaki with the ZX brigade that kicked Suzuki and the GSX-R into shape.

Being born in the early 80s (I know, hard lifestyle), it wasn't until the SRAD made an appearance that the 750's presence was felt from a personal perspective. 140bhp and weighing feck-all, it was another game-changer and I couldn't wait to try the SRAD. The often-overused word 'hooligan' was synonymous with GSX-Rs at the time, and the SRAD still feels rampant even now.

Going back to late 90s and early noughties, how many 750s were still around? The ZX-7R stopped in 2003, MV was teasing us with fragile, expensive exotica, but Suzuki was the stalwart manufacturer and continued with meaningful development. While many manufacturers dabbled with 900s and 1000s, as racing took a stranglehold on cubes, Suzuki persevered with the 750, and the bike developed in partnership with the big 'un.

Suzuki also had to make a 600 in 2001 to counter racing needs. They were also aware the 750 had to continue and launched the kickass 2000 Y model, which again raised the middleweight bar.

Before the European armada of the late noughties, it was all about Japan and the »



Once a Gixer, always a Gixer...

MODEL HISTORY

1985 GSX-R750 launched:

Unveiled at the Cologne show in 1984, the original 750 boasted a claimed 100bhp (a big advantage over its 'rivals' at the time) and was Suzuki's first racing replica. Long before SRAD, the '85 model featured SACS (Suzuki Advanced Cooling System), where the internals were oil-cooled. Suzuki also worked on friction loss and weight saving, which meant the 750cc lump hit the scales 10 per cent lighter than previous motors. Flat slides and a hydraulic clutch completed the mothership's ancillaries. Made from aluminium alloy, the MR-ALBOX frame weighed 8.1kg – roughly, er, 8.1 bags of sugar. The original's seat height was a measly 765mm and weighed just 176kg dry. We had now entered the Gixer generation. But how long would it last?



1986 The GSX-R1100 was launched, as was the limited edition race-based GSX-R750R. There were also updates to the stock 750, with a 25mm longer swingarm (for stability issues) and fairing tweaks.

1987 Among visual differences, the '87 model bagged some of the goodies from the GSX-R750R, including a steering damper, new 41mm forks with revised internals and a 21-litre fuel tank. She did some salad dodging and weighed in at 181kg – 5kg more than the original.

1988 The first major, visually-evident overhaul for the 750, with most engine and chassis parts refreshed. The previous 70 x 48.7mm bore and stroke was rejiggered with a short-stroke version (73 x 44.7mm) and featured new high-lift cams, new piston rings, new valves, and 36mm carbs to pump out 112bhp. Getting all modern, Suzuki gave the '88 model 17-inch wheels, although dry weight took a hike to 195kg. Wheelbase was shortened again to 1,400mm and the frame itself was a claimed 60 per cent more rigid. Brakes were four-pot calipers.



1989 Nothing really new here, aside from gearbox revisions and a sexier exhaust, which helped with poor ground clearance. Another blisteringly sexy, limited-edition 750R was launched; 187kg and a claimed 120bhp.



The GSX-R750 has always been relevant...



Many of a million sold...

Authoring the gixer's success

Bertie Simmonds, aka Club 18/30, was the author of *Haynes Great Bikes: Suzuki GSX-R750*, and knows more about Gixers than HSBC knows about tax loopholes.

"As a 15 year old, big into bikes, my uncle was a mechanic for Kawasaki and had been going on about how fantastic the GPZ900R was. It was all about Kawasakis at the time, and just a year later, we went from this GPZ, which was an amazingly quick bike, a TT winner and the biggest and best thing ever, to suddenly having had its year in the sun because this amazing looking, endurance-styled Suzuki GSX-R750 appeared from nowhere.

"I remember seeing the first GSX-R in 1985 when a lad wheeled past my school on one, and it looked like a full-on race bike. Other bikes had fairings before, like the CB1100Rs, but the GSX-R looked like it had just come out of the pits at Paul Ricard.

"Even the impact it had then was pretty big. Retrospectively, things are always different, and it had flexible wheels and could tie itself in knots, but when you think back to when you first saw one, it was the future. In the book, I said it was the first race replica, and although you could argue that Honda did a couple, this was the first mass-produced RR.

"In my book, Roland Brown (freelancer extraordinaire) summed it up best. He said, 'If people say that the CB750 in 1969 was the most important bike ever made because of the way it changed biking in the modern age, the GSX-R750 is probably the second most important bike.' It spawned race series, race careers, different types of bikes, race replicas, it started streetfighters – if you think about the 1100 – it's gone on and on and on, and still going on. It was a groundbreaker."

1990 The 750L saw a return to the long stroke motor of old (with new pistons, rods and valves) and featured a 4-into-1 exhaust to produce 115bhp. USD forks made their debut and the L dieted at 193kg.

1991 A newer aero-friendly fairing and 116bhp wasn't enough to disguise the ridiculous fact that the '91 750 weighed 15kg more than the previous model.

1992 1992's 'WN' bike was the first of the liquid-cooled motors, with a fresh new look, yet it still featured oil-cooled pistons and produced 118bhp. Despite a new frame, swingarm and other titbits, it still weighed in at a portly 208kg.



1993 Small engine tweaks resulted in the same power but lowered the centre of gravity and increased compression, and 1993 was all about subtle aesthetical changes. Suzuki Condensed Air Intake (SCAI) was introduced as crude form of ram-air to boost power at speed.

1994 At last, a bike that weighed less than 200kg! But the '94 Gixer, for some reason, was detuned to 112bhp. The WR bragged all new engine and chassis revamps, including six-pot calipers, a new gearbox, forks and a 180-section rear tyre.

1995 Unchanged, save for some anodised fork outers

1996 Taking the 'basics from the RGV500' of the time, Suzuki unleashed the SRAD. The super short-stroke motor was an all-new short stroke puppy, tilted 25-degrees further forward in the frame. It used 39mm electronically-controlled carbs for its auxiliary air circuit, giving better midrange – power output was a claimed 130bhp. Chassis wise, wheelbase was shorter again (1,400mm), with a 24-degree rake angle, plus all-new fully adjustable 43mm forks were wheeled out and featured more lightweight alloy. The rear's shock boasted a ride-height adjuster and the 750's 179kg dry weight (down from 200kg) was stopped via six-pot calipers.





The SRAD was mad, bad and dangerous to know...

big four's big fours. Aprilia's agricultural twins were part of a very limited range, BMW weren't even making sportsbikes at the time, and Ducatis were often out of financial reach, with preconceptions of reliability outweighing ownership potential.

And that's why the 2006 GSX-R750 was, and still is, one of the most prolific sportsbikes ever made. Pre-electronics and rider aids, the Seven-Fiddy was often faster, or at least just as fast, as some of the lairy litre bikes, with a 600's nifty handling, a decent wedge of usable power and sublime levels of grip. The truth is that if it wasn't for racing, the 750 would have made the GSX-R600 obsolete and redundant.

Its development, technology and performance may have tailed off in the past few years, but the GSX-R750 is part of Suzuki's make-up. It also fills a transparently evident gap between 600s and 1000s, although rivals also see this building fresher, sharper, more technological models like Ducati's 899 Panigale and MV's F3 range.

But losing the 750 from the GSX-R range would be like Triumph ending their love affair with the three-cylinder motor, Kawasaki ditching the colour green, or Honda binning the wings. The 750 is ingrained into the GSX-R cult and deserves another shot at greatness. **EB**

Racing timeline

- 1985** – Took a 1-2 in the Le Mans 24Hr
- 1986** – Won TTF1 world manufacturers' title
- 1987** – Won world endurance championship
- 1988** – Won Suzuki's first world superbike race and Daytona 200
- 1989** – Won AMA superbike championship
- 1990s** – Er, Ducati...
- 1997** – Won world endurance championship
- 1999** – Won AMA series and world endurance titles

MODEL HISTORY CONTINUED...

1997 Very subtle updates, new graphics.

1998 The best got even better in a bid to challenge R1s and 'Blades, with fuel injection and 46mm throttle bodies debuting in 1998. A shorter wheelbase (5mm less) with uprated suspension and brakes joined the 135bhp motor, and a close-ratio 'box.

1999 Rear wheel was widened to six inches.

2000 The new millennium brought another all-new GSX-R750. A shorter, lighter, more powerful engine (using magnesium morsels) punting out 140bhp received a load of internal trickery. The whole bike weighed a massive 13kg lighter than the previous model at 166kg dry, and although the new swingarm was 20mm longer, the 1400mm wheelbase remained.



2001 Minor tweaks

2002/3 Fuel injection updates, among other subtleties

2004 The K4 shared the same chassis and modernised cosmetics as the 600 but gained a new engine packing more grunt, with new cams and titanium valves. Dry weight was reduced to 163kg and the frame was much narrower.



2005 The 20th Anniversary limited edition is launched.

2006/7 Another fresh set of cosmetics and the samey looks we know and love/hate today, with a new stroked, higher compression motor bragging a fresh cylinder head, and housed in a new frame.

2008 The introduction of S-DMS power mode buttons join sharper lines of a heavier 750.

2011 onwards The current model in its current guise: Brembo Monoblocks, Showa BPFs, and a sleeker beast... But we want more.



demon tweeks

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MIDDLEWEIGHT

So we've heard about how good the GSX-R750 has been. But where does it stand in the pecking order today?



WORDS: FAGAN PICS: JOHNNY GAWLER

Racing still dictates much of what manufacturers deliver to the showrooms. That's why when world superbikes' ego was boosted to accommodate MotoGP-matching litre machines in the early noughties, 750s were slowly forgotten and shown the door – all except for the GSX-R750.

And when the 600s market took a plunge, it was down to the race teams around the world to eek out every last pony from the powerplants and refine each millimetre of chassis development. The only all-new project has been the three-pots from Triumph and MV Agusta, although (apparently) the Daytona 675 was never built with racing in mind.

But let's forget racing for a second. The justification for Suzuki persisting with the 750 is all about the perfect balance on the road, and there's an obvious method to the madness. A well-ridden Gixer is wholly capable of sticking with a litre bike, without the need for constant rear brake action as it threatens to loop over any crest or snap

sideways with vicious intent. Putting newbies straight onto a 1000cc, no matter how many aids, is akin to motorcycle-related euthanasia. I mean, just look at Jack Miller. Oh, hang on...

Equally, 600 four-pots require ruthless throttle bashing just to make safe overtakes. There's a seismic power differential between the two competition-induced classes, ergo a middle ground is vital, which is why Ducati's 899 Panigale has been so popular over its masochistic big brother.

So praise the (insert your higher being here) for the GSX-R750 and Triumph's Daytona 675. While the Seven-Fiddy has lacked rivals, so has the Daytona. The 600cc four-pots may win more races on a Sunday across the globe, but in stock trim, when it matters, none of them

HEAVYWEIGHTS



have been anywhere near the Triumph's outright pace, ability and pure thrills. We've always maintained that the 675 feels like cheating because it's just so good.

After the launch of the current Daytona 675, I wondered how it could get any better. But it was a very different story after we jumped off the original model; poor fuelling, suspension that lacked any damping control, and a gearbox that felt like a box of broken biscuits all pointed towards three not being the magic number. The potential was clear, granted, although it took Triumph years of refinement to eventually catch up.

And catch up Hinckley has. We don't often wheel out the standard Daytona, as the 675R is only a grand and a bit more than the

stocker's asking price. But to keep things in check and to help the aged, we did just that. Fast Bikes ventured to Anglesey to stretch the cables of this middleweight pairing and truly exploit their abilities. The OTR prices are identical. The lap times aren't, but they both emanate that perfect balance we so desire.

A lot of buying decisions are based on aesthetical preferences; why wouldn't you want to wake up, open your garage and then get morning glory. £10k should at least buy you that. And that's where the problem lies with the GSX-R. Some Gixer

junkies, who will berate any blasphemers, simply worship the 750's samey lines and cult following. Others, like me, are a bit tarty and are partial to something a little more cutting edge.



Balanced, refined, solid. Al is one of these things...

Conversely, as sexually enticing as some bikes are, they might not boast the required dynamic qualities to suit you. This pairing is the epitome of undiluted dynamic excellence, proving you don't need 200bhp and a Maplins showroom fitted as standard, instead boasting the sort of cornering speed capabilities that improve your riding and suck the litter from nearby ditches.

Neither brag any meaty electronic intrusion, other than S-DMS power mode buttons on the GSX-R (yawn) and Triumph's 'Race' ABS system (which is actually pretty handy, sometimes). Thanks to the never-intended racing involvement (and its modest success), the 675 now comes with an adjustable swingarm pivot, just so you can nail your A-road PB times with an abundance of rear-end grip. Meanwhile, the only chassis adjustment available on the Suzuki is the three-way option of rearset positioning – bloody useful for trackdays or, conversely, long jaunts.

Modernity comes in the form of Brembo monoblocks



Both offer compact riding positions, particularly the GSX-R. Your limbs are never spread too far away from each other and it wafts a short, stumpy stance. The Daytona is very tall, yet super-anorexic, all thanks to that inline triple powerplant and, since the update in 2013, there's ample room to move around the cockpit for taller riders – unlike on the Gixer.

Triumph admits that if they knew the supersports market would suffer as it has, it wouldn't have invested the big-bucks and time in developing the Daytona to the extent it has. And it's bloody extensive. Garry McCoy once stated that the 675 he was racing felt like a 250GP bike. The bearded slide monster wasn't being paid by Triumph, so who are we to argue? And that was the previous model...

The work in repositioning the underseat exhaust sounds simple, although in reality the weight distribution changes are huge. The subsequent results in handling are just as huge. On the exhaust theme, all 2015 GSX-Rs get a tasty R11 Yoshimura can, which goes a long way to polishing the turd that is the Suzuki's standard outlet (as seen here).

With next to no development in recent years, it's not surprising the Suzuki feels lethargic and lacklustre after jumping off the Trumpet. In isolation, the Gixer is superb and was so in North Wales. There's a real

compactness to the chassis and, while it doesn't have the razor-sharp steering of the 675, it navigates beautifully with neutrality that you can exploit. The GSX-R750 is also still one the most planted mid-corner assassins on the market, which also means unrivalled road holding.

Carrying an extra (claimed) 4kg than the Triumph, in truth it feels a lot more thanks to the 675's sharper geometry and steady evolution of mass centralisation, and is a little more sluggish to move up and down its stroke. The Daytona is far more motivated to meet an apex, with less physical input needed and is effortless to complete any corner. Whenever you brake, however hard you brake, there's always oodles of confidence on lever release to know you'll always make the apex onboard the 675. The R model has always felt a little too nose in its posture, despite offering a mass of confidence in the front-end, and I strangely prefer the slightly more relaxed attitude of the stocker. Meanwhile, in the blue corner, the Suzuki is impeccably neutral. It's like the quiet kid at school; unassuming, relaxed, looks a bit tardy but lethal when it matters, and so intuitive to boot.

Noah was used to this dash...



No wonder Pops Yoshimura drove flash cars...





A very non-lumpy lump...

Rolling on Pirelli Supercorsa SPs, the 675's grip potential is there to be abused from the off and that radiates through the bars, while the GSX-R's ageing Bridgestone rubber is a clear restriction on track. Despite the lack of outright grip, there's an unexplained magical substance in that chassis somewhere, somehow, and GSX-Rs of any ilk have never suffered with weight transfer issues or excessive pitching. There's a real sense of composure that makes it so well suited to Sunday TTs round any 37 and a bit miles of your choosing. Granted, it was a few seconds off the 675's pace around Anglesey but it's hardly a barometer of its potential. Feed it some sticky rubber and there really wouldn't

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ENGINE

2011 was the last time the GSX-R had any meaningful change, and then it didn't get much new changed within the motor. Titanium inlet valves were a nice addition, losing a few grams of weight, but other cues were taken from the 600. That's why it got a reshaped cylinder head to improve gas flow. The ECU is faster with a new map to take advantage of the better flowing exhaust and airbox, and by repositioning it on the bike 0.25 kilos of wiring was chopped from it. The 750 kept the S-DMS throttle mode system.

CHASSIS

The big change to the 2011 bike (and hence this one) was the switch to Showa BPFs and Brembo monoblocks. Less was made of the push to scrub weight off, but it was here that Suzuki went to town. The bodywork itself is impressively thin, and there's less of it hanging over the front and rear 55 and 35mm respectively. This, and the thinner material, contributes to a staggering 3.4kg weight loss in fairings alone. The 750 keeps its adjustable footrests, that are a very neat touch, but that's it as far as adjustment goes.

Highlights

- ▶ Last of the 750s
- ▶ S-DMS buttons
- ▶ Showa BPFs
- ▶ Brembo calis
- ▶ 190kg
- ▶ 124bhp

TRACK

Brilliant but bland

FAST ROAD

Perfect balance?

HOOLIGAN

Not like it was

NEW RIDER

Super-friendly

DESIRABILITY

Oh look, an eagle

8

9

5

5

3

BENJAMIN'S OPINION



I can't write about the GSX-R750 these days without feeling a little cruel. It's such a brilliant all round machine that can be many things to many different people. Great chassis, lovely engine, wonderful riding position, the list goes on. But it's barely changed in a decade now, which smacks of resting on your laurels a bit too much, and I just can't forgive Suzuki for letting its most iconic machine slide into the abyss of invisibility amongst all the latest and greatest when it should be the shining light. Why buy new, when secondhand is the same but cheaper? Leaving it static does them no favours in the sales department. C'mon, Suzuki, we know you've a stunning update in the wings ready to blow us all away, right? Hello?

BJ's Verdict

8/10

Verdict

8/10

Still amazing, still fast and still a cracking base to work with, but against this competition the GSX-R750 still struggles...

- + NO FRILLS MIDDLEWEIGHT, CHASSIS, SO EASY
- BIT DULL, SAMEY LOOKS, S-DMS

be much between the two protagonists.

Remember Spliffy jeans? I do. For a few years in the 90s everyone had to wear Spliffy jeans, even if you didn't smoke doobies. Showa's BPF technology is almost a default component – like Spliffy jeans in the 90s – on many Japanese bikes, and still is nowadays. There are palpable stability benefits under braking and while we could never label the Suzuki's damping as shoddy, it does feel a bit two-part and lacks the fluid, creamy stroke action of the 675's Kayaba kit.

The stock 675 may be bereft of Öhlins and Brembo goodies but you'll have to be a top-level racer to unearth any deficiencies. If anything, the plusher ride, courtesy of the Kayaba suspension, equals a better road bike. With 10mm less travel at the front-end, and even more on the rear, the stocker feels more condensed and will suit less committed riders looking for responsiveness, although it flatters anyone.

You always get the feeling that the cheaty 675 arrives at a braking zone or entry point carrying a little more speed, and that's thanks to the motor and chassis working together sublimely. You'd never guess the 675 was giving away 75cc and 10bhp, such is the lively delivery of the triple and the ensuing soundtrack.

Paired with a motor that spins so vigorously, the 675 brags very short gearing, which is fantastic going up the 'box via the optional sexual quickshifter (also making light work of any road duties) but often fiddly when downshifting and preparing the bike for a left-hander in a hurry. Pinned in top gear carrying big lean, edging 150mph as you head up the hill towards the braking zone at Rocket, the last thing you want is ABS throwing a wobbler and sending you into the corner with another load of mph, which it did a few times on the Trumpy. The fact you have to reset your preference every time the ignition is turned on is even more exasperating. Braking is an area where the Gixer matches the 675, and its wider gearing



spectrum didn't sacrifice its lap time.

Anglesey's flowing nature and limited space to manipulate top-end prowess suits the apex-hungry middleweights, and our Sportsbike of the Year test has proved that there's very little between lap times of all the bikes attending. The silky, seamless and relentless delivery of the Triumph simply works in Wales, punching hard on corner exit and seeking out the next corner with more enthusiasm. The usability from the bottom-end stretches all the way to the redline, and it

doesn't waste any of its rev-range.

The same could be said for the Suzuki's aging motor, although there isn't the same formidable execution. There's an overwhelming sense of castration, caused by emission-sapping requirements, when pinning the throttle on the GSX-R – we've seen as much as 15bhp gains from a full-system fitted. The induction bark exaggerates the engine's output initially, as the engine plays catch up with your throttle actions. As flat and linear as the Gixer's power curve is, it still thrives in the upper echelons of the analogue dash and requires momentum to build its engine speed. There's zero punch, as with the Daytona, but between Anglesey's (and the road's) faster turns it carries its speed supremely well.

Given the S-DMS buttons are largely redundant on the Thou', they're utterly useless on the 750. The delicious, soft-action throttle and friendly power necessitate a ham-fisted twunt to provoke a highside on the Suzuki, although the Triumph's throttle is far crisper and more direct without being nervy at any point. Coupled with the sexy arse-end grip, it makes a mockery of traction control on 1000cc weaponry.

Triumph has a knack of sending out 675s with enough excess initial throttle tube movement to worry quick-action manufacturers, which understandably hampers connectivity. This little factoid being the single adversity to the 675's armoury says it all, and this particular bike was OK. If you suffer from it, it's an easy fix.

A lot has to be said for just how easy both bikes are to exploit. Anglesey is a physically draining, two wheeled heaven in of Wales, yet we could have busted out laps for hours. Unfortunately, the bastard sun went down. Where's Nik Kershaw when you need him...



“IF ANYTHING, THE PLusher
RIDE OF THE STOCKER'S
KAYABA SUSPENSION EQUALS
A BETTER ROAD BIKE...”

The Gixer can't live with this accuracy...

TRIUMPH DAYTONA 675 £9,599



ENGINE

The 675cc triple got a larger bore and shorter stroke in 2013, with wet liners dumped for Nikasil coated bores to accommodate the changes. Piston diameter was increased from 74mm to 76mm and the stroke reduced from 52.3mm to 49.6mm. Compression ratio was upped and high-grade main bearings were installed. The new crank reduces power loss through oil drag and inertia is reduced. All told, the new bike gained 3bhp over the old one, and pushed out very healthy figures for the supersport class.

CHASSIS

With this standard 675, it's all about different geometry from the R version. Rake and trail are reduced to 22.9 degrees and 87.2mm from the R's 23 degrees and 87.9mm. Other important changes are with the Kayaba fork (the R is the owner of Öhlins at each end), their own version of the BPF, crucial to its road holding, and also the Kayaba shock to complement the fork. The seat is 10mm lower than the R, and the brakes are by Nissin, with ABS. Then the 675 got its new look, with panels differing to those before.

Highlights

- ▷ 675cc triple
- ▷ Race' ABS
- ▷ Adjustable swingarm
- ▷ Kayaba suzies
- ▷ 115bhp
- ▷ 184kg

TRACK

British champion

FAST ROAD

Right up there

HOOLIGAN

Not really

NEW RIDER

My first supersports

DESIRABILITY

600s don't sell

Verdict 10/10

Undisputed champion of the 600s and the leftfield middleweights doesn't look like it'll be toppled anytime soon. And it's British.

✦ EVERYTHING, EVEN IN STOCK TRIM

✦ NOTHING, EVEN IN STOCK TRIM

It's like it's on autopilot...

BENJAMIN'S OPINION



Until we get this back to back with an MV Agusta 675, and what a show-down that will be, it remains the best supersport bike out there in my opinion. And this isn't even the R version, which takes track skills to scalpel-like levels of accuracy, and an experience you never want to end. This version of the 675, while still fantastically handy on track, has had enough little tweaks to make it extremely effective on the road or day to day grind. In fact it's much like the R, except it's just not quite as sharp. It steers a little slower, the brakes aren't as aggressive, and so on. But in relative terms to the rest of the completion, it rules, and that's why I love it.

BJ's Verdict

9/10



TECH DATA

 **Suzuki GSX-R750**
 **Triumph Daytona 675**


ENGINE

Type	750cc, liquid-cooled, 16v, inline four	675cc, liquid-cooled, 12v, inline-triple
Bore x Stroke	70.0 x 48.7mm	76.0 x 49.58mm
Compression	12.5:1	13.1:1
Fuelling	Suzuki EFI	Multipoint EFI, twin injectors
Claimed Power	124.6bhp @ 12,500rpm	115.5bhp @ 13,500rpm
Claimed Torque	74.09Nm @ 11,200rpm	68.4Nm @ 10,250rpm

CHASSIS

Frame	Aluminium twin-spar	Aluminium twin-spar
F Suspension	41mm Showa BPF fork, fully adjustable	Kayaba 41mm fork, fully adjustable
R Suspension	Monoshock, fully adjustable	Kayaba monoshock, fully adjustable
Front Brakes	Brembo monoblock calipers, 310mm discs	Nissin 4-piston monoblock calipers, 310mm discs
Rear Brakes	Single-piston caliper, 220mm disc	Brembo single-piston caliper, 220mm disc

DIMENSIONS

Wheelbase	1,390mm	1,375mm
Seat Height	810mm	820mm
Kerb Weight	190kg	186kg
Fuel Capacity	17L	17L

PRICE

Price	£9,599	£9,599
From	SUZUKI GB www.suzuki-gb.com	TRIUMPH UK www.triumphmotorcycles.co.uk

An unimpressed
seagull spectates...



The 675 is spectacular.
So is the scenery...





AI just wipes some drool off...



Conclusion

Before delving deep and reminiscing, let's talk bucks. A full-fat supersports weapon for under £10k shouldn't be scoffed at these days, but now it's all about the deals and never-never. With just a £2k deposit, you can bring home a Daytona 675 for 37 months of £135 to pay using Triumph's TriStar finance offering. And you get £600 quid's worth of aftermarket goodies, so opt for that quickshifter. Suzuki offers a near-identical package, but a slightly lower APR, but that's scant redemption over its performance deficit.

Both were epic at Anglesey, and getting to and from the Island paints the same picture. In this pairing, we've got two of the very best road bikes going, backed up by bearable ergonomics and the bonus of not having to toggle through endless electronic preferences. They're dialled-in from the crate.

Suzuki could, and should, build an all-new, shit-kicking 750 that would annihilate any middleweight. But thanks to financial ruin, a lack of racing placement, a MotoGP project sapping millions of yen, and greedy bankers, that's über unlikely. The base they've got here is incredible and a makeover would go a long way to attracting promiscuous buyers and enticing previous Gixer owners back to the

fray – it's definitely more chicken korma than Karma Sutra. There's nothing dynamically wrong in its arsenal and it's all you'll ever need on the highways, effortless in doing so. Is it a bit too easy?

Ultimately, though, the Triumph is faster, more agile and far more clinical than the Suzuki, not to mention more encompassing. The Gixer doesn't offer anything unique, or grab you by the nuts like the 675 does. It's all a bit 'meh' compared to the new stuff

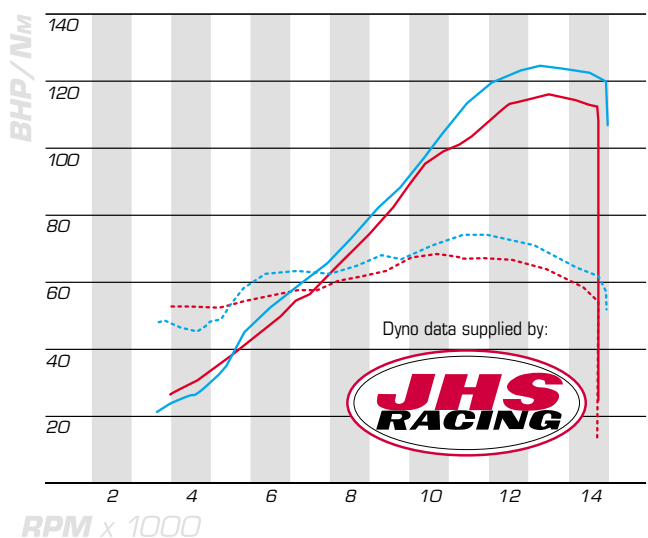
On the flipside, there's something innately

intriguing about Hinckley's Daytona. Since the reincarnation of three-pots, the soundtrack and engine characteristics supply heightened riding sensations over bland four-cylinder bikes, and mated to the chassis that seemingly Jesus created from a loaf, two fishes and some aluminium ore, it's a devastating combination. Don't think of the 675 as just another 600, as it's the Daley Thompson of sportsbikes.

New doesn't always mean better, although in this instance, the newer profoundly beats the elder statesman.

*If only it was
2007, the Gixer
would rule!*

POWER AND TORQUE



RPM x 1000

POWER ———
TORQUE - - - - -

SUZUKI GSX-R750 ———
TRIUMPH DAYTONA 675 ———



addiction

BRET RICHARDSON'S

SUZUKI GSX-R1000 K6

This is the third time Bret's Suzuki has graced these pages, and it's never looked better



"This bike has been in Fast Bike's centerfold three times now. The first time as a WSB Alstare replica, and the second time was as a Crescent Rizla BSB replica, and I've kept upgrading it every year. I just love this bike to be honest. It rides really nice, it handles beautifully and I even won a rolling road shoot-out I went to recently against newer GSX-Rs. The dyno guy said this was the last of the true proper superbikes, with no

catalytic converter or power modes, and so on. You just open the throttle and you get what you ask for. I've ridden all the newer Suzukis, the big-bang R1 and the new ZX-10R, and none pull like my Suzuki. And it keeps going until there are no revs left. At one point I had this and a K5, a K4 and an old GS1000. I even bought a Yamaha FZ1 to run around on, but whenever I was on it I was just wishing I was riding this GSX-R. So I don't think I will ever sell it, ever!"

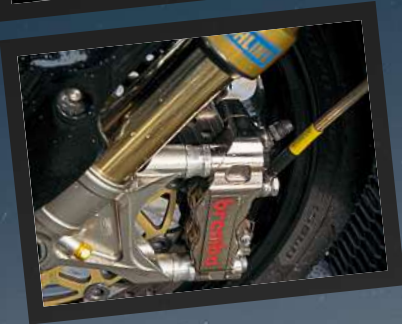
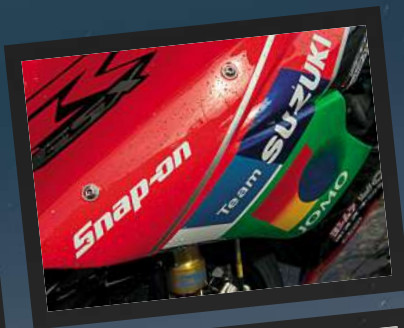
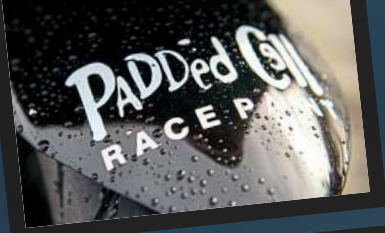




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MODIFICATIONS

BRET RICHARDSON'S SUZUKI GSX-R1000 K6

ENGINE

Yoshimura STR-R cams, springs and retainers
Cylinder head ported and skimmed
Yoshimura gearbox
Crescent Suzuki WSB clutch
Yoshimura velocity stacks
BMC air-filter
Yoshimura Titanium 4-1 system
Bazzaz ZF1 with TC, quickshifter and auto-tune
Superbike oil cooler
Samco hoses
Woodcraft engine casings
Yoshimura case savers
Titanium bolts

CHASSIS

Öhlins K9 R&T forks
Öhlins steering damper
Öhlins rear shock
Yoshimura Factory swingingarm
Marchesini forged wheels
Billet top yoke
Brembo 320mm front discs
Brembo HBK nickel plated calipers
Brembo master cylinder
Suzuki DRZ rear master cylinder
Brembo rear disc
Brembo 4 pot endurance rear caliper
Goodridge braided Hoses

AESTHETICS

Yoshimura 24-litre endurance tank
Pro Mac rearsets
Translogic dash
K9 Mirrors with tinted lenses
Bikestyle undertray
CS carbon hugger, chain guard, tank in-fills and heel guards
Titanium bolts
Paint - 2006 Yoshimura 8hr Suzuka colours by Padded Cell

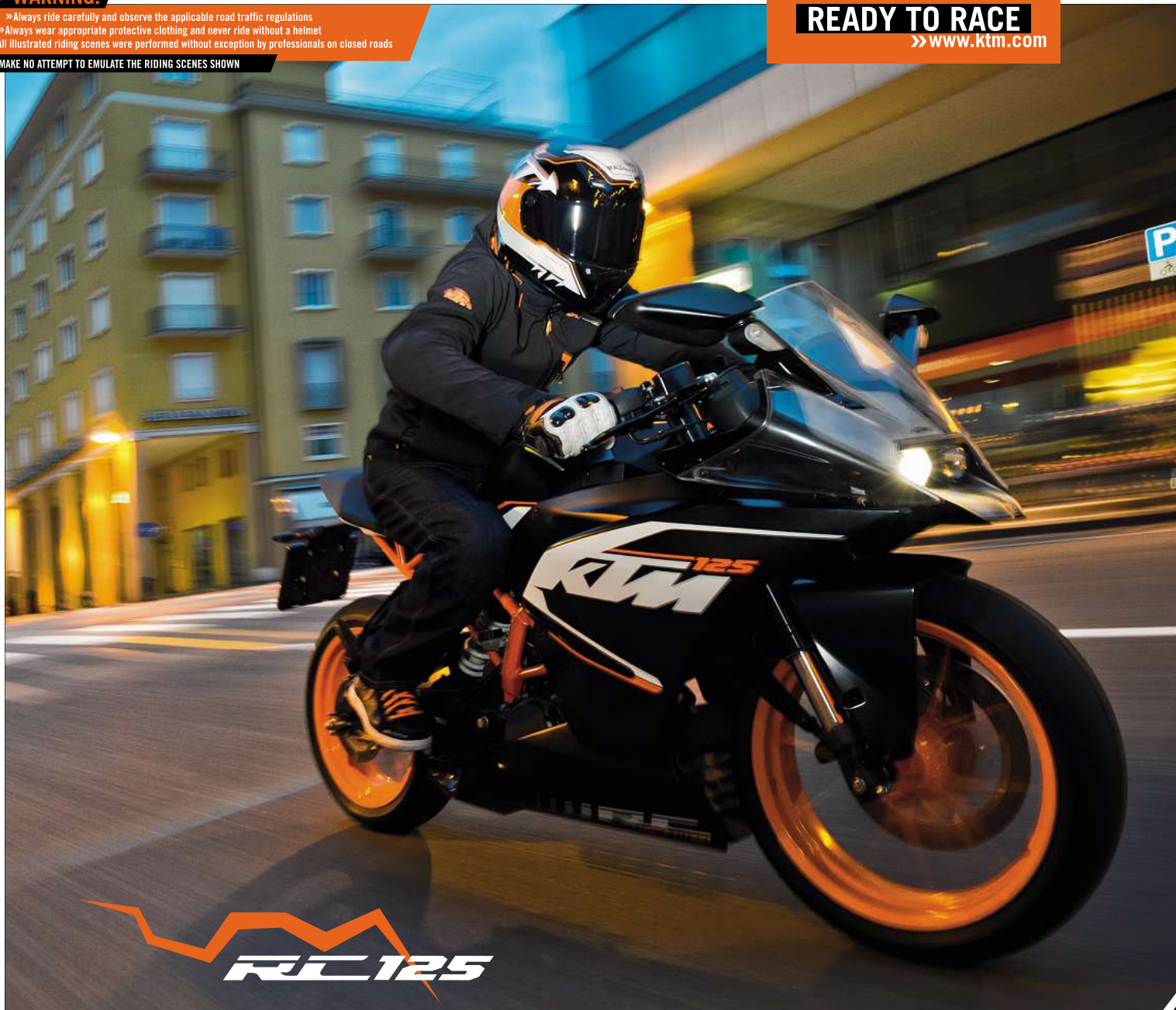




WARNING!

- » Always ride carefully and observe the applicable road traffic regulations
 - » Always wear appropriate protective clothing and never ride without a helmet
 - » All illustrated riding scenes were performed without exception by professionals on closed roads
- » MAKE NO ATTEMPT TO EMULATE THE RIDING SCENES SHOWN

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- » High-tech instruments
- » Loads of style
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METZELER RACETEC RR

It's every road tester's dream: a Spanish circuit for the day, unlimited number of 2015 BMW S 1000 RRs and sticky rubber, although sometimes those bastard things called clouds appear and dump that nasty rain. And the rain in Spain fell mainly on Almeria's plane. Balls...

We were supposed to be testing the all-new Metzeler Racetec RR, although the rain didn't stop and we had more chance of testing Rossi's mum than the new race rubber.

“AS THE RAIN DIDN'T STOP, WE HAD MORE CHANCE OF TESTING ROSSI'S MUM THAN THE NEW METZELER RACETEC RR RACE RUBBER...”

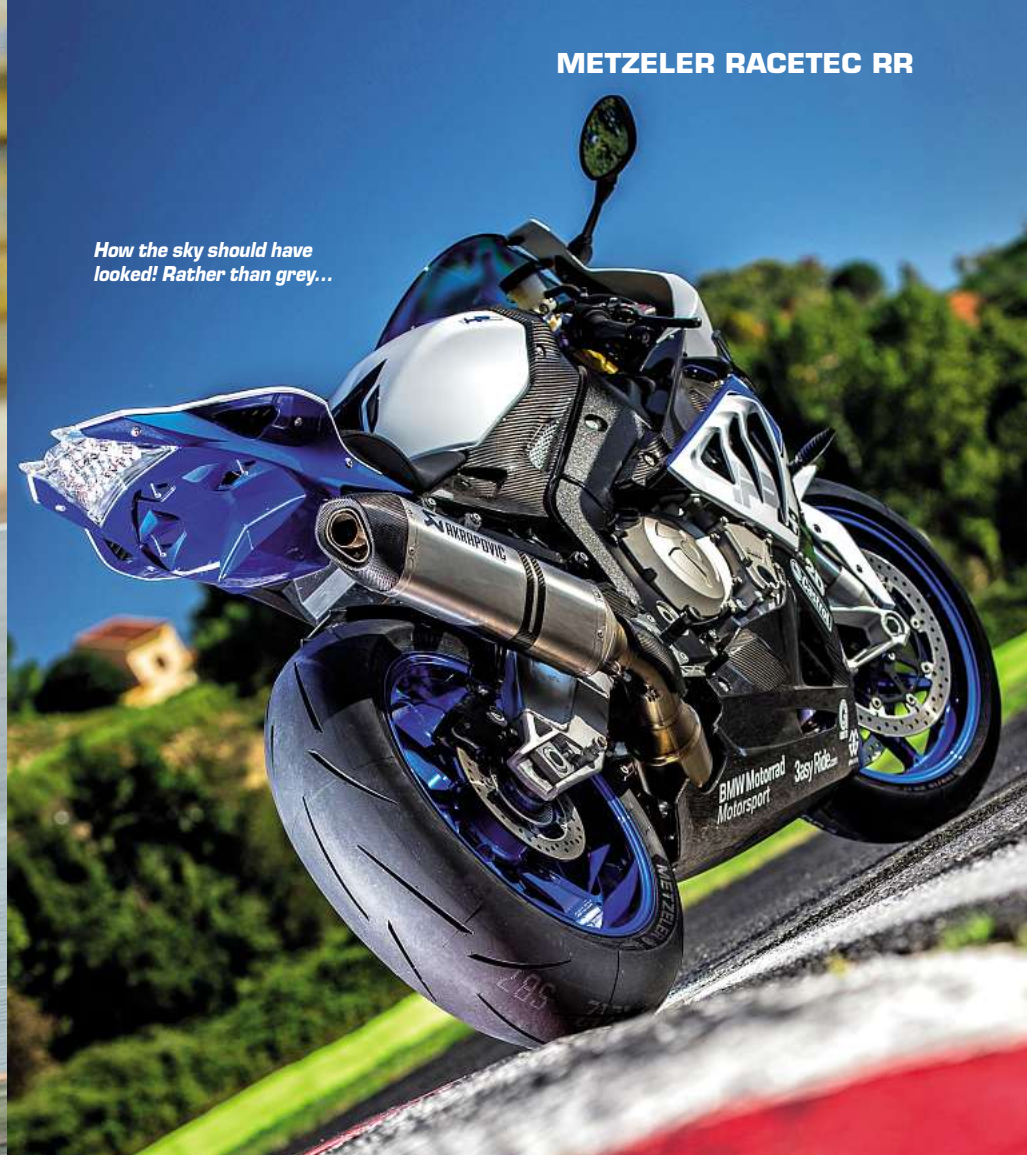
The influx of new technology needs backup from the final contact patch, so tyre manufacturers are really upping their game – not only in competition with each other, but by taming 200bhp, nurturing the new handling capabilities and supplying grip to 2015's freshest metal.

Being the only tyre manufacturer to concentrate solely on bike rubber, it's about time we had something special from Metzeler. Nothing remains from the RR's predecessor, other than some technology.

Using the patented 'cap and base' layout, the new Racetec RR uses the harder middle compound to generate heat into the softer shoulders – makes sense really, especially for pure road racing. A stiff ply material and 0° belt allow softer compounds for the RR.

In the hands of Gary Johnson and the Smiths Daytona 675, the RR won the





How the sky should have looked! Rather than grey...

Luckily, Metzeler had some M7 RRs in the van...

WORDS: FAGAN PICS: VARIEGO

Supersport race at the TT in 2014 and several other international road races before its launch. Like many race tyres nowadays, it was developed on the frontline with direct racer input. Metzeler riders stood on the podium 39 times in 2014, with 16 wins. In a world full of one-make this, and control tyre that, pure road racing (along with World Endurance) is the ideal testing bed for tyre manufacturers.

The RR is available in various 160, 180, 190 and 200 rear sizes and a 120/70-17 front, and K1/2/3 compounds of yesteryear. K1 is used for hot conditions and abrasive surfaces, K2 is for colder conditions and the K3 is a pure road tyre with mileage allowances. Whereas the K3 was the only road-legal tyre from the Interact, Metzeler have made all three compounds legal for the road. 🏍️

SPORTEC M7 RR

The M7 isn't a new tyre but was the only choice for the wet conditions at Almeria. I've sampled them in the UK on dry roads and the occasional damp one, but the M7's wet weather skills on a circuit were nothing short of stunning.

Along with Michelin's PR4, there isn't another tyre on the market that can match its wet weather prowess, and it's even more impressive to think that it's a sports tyre, rather than touring-based rubber like the Michelin, sitting

just below the Racetec RR in Metzeler's range. They warm-up seriously quickly, even in the wet, and BMW's test rider and ex-GP racer, Jurgen Fuchs, was kneedown for most of Almeria's corners with a wake of spray being kicked up from the rear tyre.

The front tyre uses just one compound with 100% silica, while the rear is a bi-compound with softer shoulders (again, 100% silica) for wet and dry grip. The harder middle compound is 45mm wide and allows decent mileage. Like the Racetec, the M7

uses 0° steel belt technology and brags a land/sea ratio of 14.7% on the front and 11.1% on the rear.



At least it was probably warmer than a wet Cadwell!



Just add sunshine...

PAULO BRIVIO HEAD OF R&D RACING

"The Racetec RR is a completely new tyre, so with the front tyre, there's a completely new profile. When you design new tyres, you adjust and change everything inside in order to find the right balance with the rear tyre.

"In terms of geometry and diameter, the front is slightly bigger. There's a different radius to the profile – the RR is quicker to manoeuvre and more agile than its predecessor.

"About the rear, we have a new carcass fabric, which is stiffer because we can. Why? Because we make the design of the inside of the tyre, the ply, more flexible to be smooth on uneven road surfaces, so we decrease the stiffness in the vertical direction, so the impact and rebound is smoother, and the tyre stays on the ground when it hits a pothole or repair. So by decreasing the vertical stiffness, we could increase the textile strength to recover the lateral stiffness.

"We want this to be at its maximum. The benefits to a stiffer carcass are the tyre stays very stable on the straight, not just for racing but for road use too, and also to deliver confidence to the rider. If you go fast, you don't want to feel weaving. A motorcycle is typically unstable at speed, so we want to correct that, and at 350kph, we can say that doesn't happen – which is out of the range for a normal bike!

"The compound is also completely new. Different in terms of how we decide which polymers and resins we use, and how we mix them. The target was very high: simple but very high. We made the tyre better in every way, then we focus on the warm-up, because it's really important for the road use, for sporty riders but for road use, because even on the road, there are a lot of times when you start and stop, and not only at the beginning of the ride – like fuel stops, lunch and taking in the views.

"It's also very important in terms of the racing application because warm-up not only means the first kilometre but how is the grip condition of the left side after 4 minutes of only straights or right-handers. This is a key performance that we stress.

"The pure grip has been improved but also in a wider range, which has been a very challenging target. A tyre with lots of grip and performance in a narrow range is very dangerous at races like the TT. Sometimes the temperature in Douglas can be mid-twenties but can drop a lot on The Mountain.

"So the structure and compound is completely new. What is the same is how we communicated the right compound for the conditions. The K1/2/3 sit in the same position in the range but in a much wider area. The K3 is in another dimension compared to the K1/2.

"The project has been a couple of years in the making. The TT and North West 200 is the most severe proving ground for the new Racetec RR. We didn't design the tyres at the TT and decide, ok, now we sell.

"The tyre that Gary Johnson won the Supersport race on was a K1 front and rear, and nothing special. It was the last stage of development because for sure, we cannot race with a full prototype tyre because that would be dangerous, and we are not foolish or crazy!

"Racer input (from the likes of Guy Martin and Gary Johnson) and R&D from our own test riders run in parallel to create the tyre. With the various sizes and compounds, the Racetec is not just one tyre and some are developed without racing activity."

More Info: www.metzeler.com



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FUEL FOR THOUGHT

Ever thought about what you're actually sticking in your tank and how it really works? No, us neither. Until now...

It's well known throughout the advertising and marketing world that branded vodka is one of the hardest products in the world to sell. Without any distinctive character, aroma, taste, or colour the only thing that gets a specific brand flying off the shelves is how much money and inspiration goes into the marketing campaign to create awareness, association and customer loyalty. The next worst thing to sell is petrol, another product where one brand's product looks and does exactly the same as any other...

How often do you think about what fuel goes in your bike, beyond price, that is? I dare say, not very often. Beyond price, we're more than likely creatures of habit, filling up at the usual place on the commute, halfway through a ride out, or at the supermarket to collect a few more points to get us three pence off a loaf of bread. Brand loyalty and conscious consumption with a certain company doesn't really come in to any of our thinking, largely because the product is more or less the same. Thanks to strict regulations, 95 octane fuel is 95 octane fuel. Super plus is super plus. Shell is the same as Sainsbury's. Right? Well, not quite...

WORDS: ROOTSY PICS: SHELL





The test car unfortunately crashed into the dyno...

economy, largely because no two vehicles are the same. Some engines will, of course, utilize this improved fuel more, but Shell is keener to tell us about how it lubricates your motor better and cleans your engine as it gets to work on the sooty deposits left in your car. When diesel injectors are as small as 100 microns to provide optimal fuel atomisation, and bikes running around 50-60 microns, you can see why it's crucial to keep these passages as clean as a whistle. But does it all work?

The Shell Test

Shell had rolled up to the test track with a Ducati Panigale full to the brim with Shell V-Power Nitro+. I was then charged with piloting this beast around the Prodrive track to feel the difference. Except I couldn't feel a difference because I had nothing to compare it against. The Ducati felt potent, fast and a frivolous way to spend a Tuesday afternoon – but it told me nothing about the fuel. What was more revealing, however, was a VW Golf parked in a garage and connected to wires galore. Rather cleverly, engineers had knocked up two cylinders to run off this fuel and the other two to run another fuel (in this case from a supermarket in Cheshire). Hooked up to a dyno, cylinder pressure was measured as the car ran a defined program, showing that the bank fuelled by the Shell stuff was running 4.05 per cent higher than the other two cylinders. Then the clever stuff happened as the modified fuel pump and rail were switched so the Shell stuff fuelled the other two cylinders. The result? A 3.07 per cent improvement in cylinder pressure. Not science, but an impressive demonstration.

In trying to extol the virtues of its new formula V-Power Nitro+ fuel, its 99 octane concoction, Shell invited Fast Bikes up to the Prodrive Performance Centre near Kenilworth to learn more about this volatile liquid that we blindly pump into our fuel tanks in regular fashion – and it was a surprise to learn that, like vodka, for every bottle of own brand, there's also a fancy bottle of Grey Goose to choose from.

Spending \$1.3bn a year on R&D, Shell is always busy playing with formulations and fuels. 120 people are employed in this development role, and their efforts go towards making its fuel better, cleaner, more efficient or more potent. With a fleet of 300 vehicles to test on, you can be sure that this is no small undertaking. Not part of that fleet, but certainly part of the development process, is the Ferrari F1 team and Ducati's race team too. Regarding its new fuel, Shell reckons that it contains 99 per cent of what they feed into Fernando Alonso's car. They wouldn't tell us what was in the other one per cent...

The new Nitro+ unleaded fuel is marketed to make your motor work better, with improved detergents getting to work on deposits left in your motor from regular fuel and containing 25 per cent more Friction Modification Technology than Shell's previous formulation. This lubricates the top end better, especially around the top ring area – and we all know how important that is to keep lubed...

You were probably expecting the main advantage of this new fuel to be whopping dollops of extra power, rather than added detergents and better lubrication, but these two facets lead to better performance by enabling the motor to work as it should. It contains rather more than you'd assume, with 2-300 different compound types found in the fuel itself. That's nothing compared to the equivalent diesel, where that figure grows to well over five figures with much longer molecules found in its composition.

Shell make no power claims about the new V-Power fuel, or even if it will improve

Shell ambassador, Jake Humphrey, looks impressed...



Jake looks forward to his fee.
Roots is just happy for fuel home...



Fuel's gonna piss
out of that one...

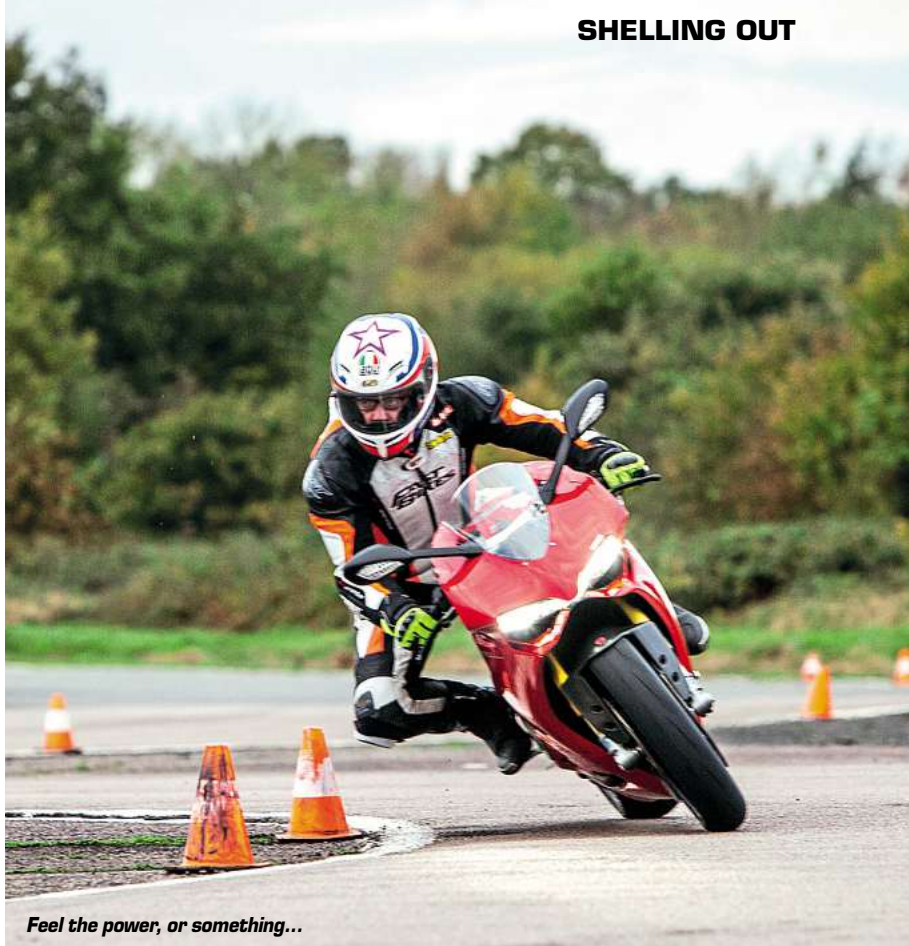


The dyno tells no lies...

THE FAST BIKES TEST

Back in the real world, it was time to put Shell's claims to the test. Having run my longterm R1 on supermarket fuel for most of its short life, I popped into JHS to get a dyno run as a base. The bike spat out 152.3bhp and 100.84Nm of torque. I then proceeded to fill it up on the Shell V-Power Nitro+. But not just once, but for a further four times, as I put 643 miles on the bike (already with 6,000 miles on it) to let the detergents do their bit. Any analysis up to this point was subjective, but the bike felt perky although I couldn't really make any economy comparisons given the differing nature of my journeys. Let's just say it was certainly no worse.

But after 500 miles it was back to JHS in very similar atmospheric conditions to the first run. James plugged in the beast and let rip. This was exciting, and would prove that more horsepower could be released by just using better fuel. And it did – to the tune of 0.12bhp! At peak power the performance increase was modest to say the least – 152.42bhp. Elsewhere in the range there were slightly better gains and the fuel helped to fill a few little holes in the curve, but there was nothing really to write home about. A picture of sparkling internals may prove that the R1's engine was a cleaner place, but in terms of producing more power the results were very limited – although Shell was at pains to not point to any performance gains. The R1 doesn't have a knock sensor (unlike, say, some KTM models), meaning it's hard to exploit any improved potency in fuel. Again, this isn't science, merely the result of one limited test. So that's why we're putting a whole range of fuels under the microscope in the future to discover if anything actually makes a difference...



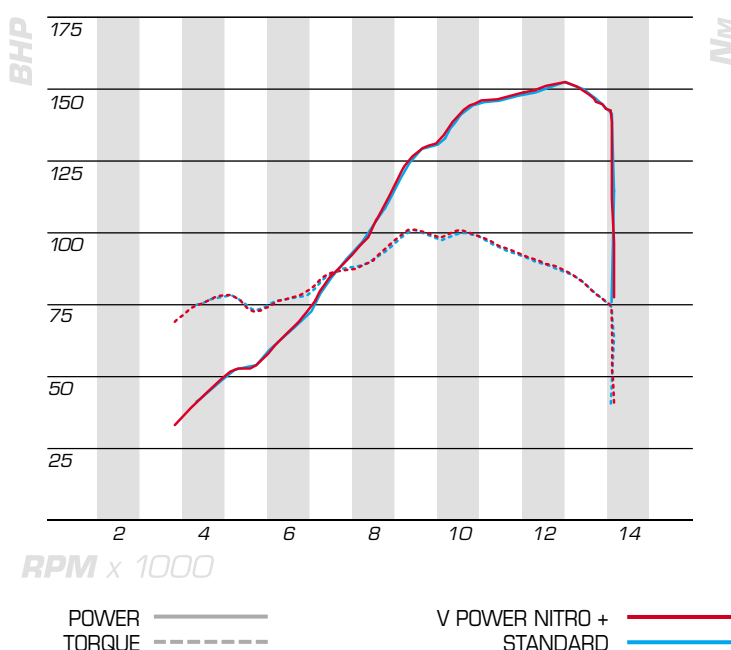
Feel the power, or something...

Conclusion

I'm tight by nature, and expect results when I pay extra for things. So I was expecting a boost in bhp with the Shell fuel in, but the extra money spent (admittedly Shell gave us tight-fisted journos some fuel vouchers to encourage use) didn't produce the results I was hoping for. Shell's argument that the fuel would produce benefits in terms of a cleaner engine are also hard to verify. True, the R1 was relatively new and wouldn't have had filthy innards, so I dare say there wasn't much to clean in the first place. I did

stick some in my shitbox Meriva (I know, shocking) and the car ran much better when treated to the Nitro+, to the extent that even my missus noticed the difference without me telling her I'd splashed out. So the conclusion is try it for yourself. Certain engines will respond better and produce more power, others will get cleaned and run more efficiently. But there will be some powerplants that will elicit no discernable benefits – although for the extra quid or so a tank, it's an experiment worth trying...

POWER AND TORQUE



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WORDS: ROOTSY PICS: GARETH HARFORD

The store with more

Padgett's of Batley sells more than speed. Contained within this hallowed shop is all manner of history, technology, curiosities - and brand new bikes...

We kicked off our TT column with Clive Padgett last month by going up to visit the man and his eponymous bike shop. But what was only supposed to be a catch up turned into spending way too much time up there than was sensible. But this is what happens when you walk into one of the three big showrooms owned by the Batley-based family. Time mysteriously slows, your eyes get drawn to strange and wondrous trinkets and you have to fight every sinew in your body to not put a deposit down on a Honda RS250 race bike or the like.

You'll get to read what Clive and the gang have been up to preparing for the TT this month, but Padgett's is more than just a race team. And it's more than just a shop. It's a biking institution, packed to the rafters with biking paraphernalia old and new, friendly folk and the aura of success.

What with the rows of old race bikes up on the mezzanine, unsold machines from the nineties littering the shop floor, and yesteryear's bike kit in the clothing department I make a rookie mistake and mention the M-word - museum. Clive quickly pulls me up.

"No, we mustn't use the word museum," instructs Clive. "Museum implies old. Yes, you can look at everything in here and see the heritage of the place, but we're a business that's definitely at the pointy end of things. You only have to look at what we do in here and on track to realise that we live for tomorrow, not yesterday." It's true. What museum could sell you a brand new Fireblade, a wheelbarrow's worth of HRC kit or build three bikes that between them won five TTs in a week?

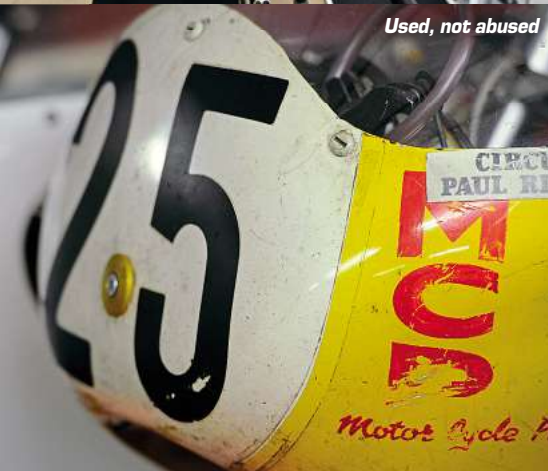
Though Padgett's and racing go together like strawberries and cream, it's the till ringing throughout the week that allows Clive and the team to live their passion at the weekend. The longest serving Yamaha, Honda and Suzuki dealers in the country, the Padgett's brand also extends to Kawasaki and Aprilia across three showrooms within 200 yards of each other. The firm is also the only HRC centre in the UK, and also a YEC Yamaha race kit supplier too. These ventures aren't handed out like sweets by the Japanese - these are a true mark of respect.

And it's not just parts that Padgett's has sold, over the years whole race bikes have been built. "When Suzuki made the Mark 9 RG500," says Clive, "we sold half of everything that Suzuki made. After that, Suzuki came to us and said that they didn't want to be supplying bikes here, there and everywhere. They wanted us to build them



A brand spanking old YZF

High five!



Used, not abused

instead. So they supplied the engines to us and that's what we did. We got the frames made in the UK and then built the bikes up. So Suzuki allowed us, a little shop in Batley, to build on license all their race bikes for the world. That was something."

In many ways, the shop is an imposing place. TT winning bikes, parts hewn from unobtainium and stories of Clive selling bikes to Rossi, Crutchlow and Melandri all imply that this is a high end dealer that's only interested in the glitterati of the paddock. But I've never met someone so friendly and down to earth as Clive. In true Yorkshireman tones, he states, "We've got our feet on the ground, we've all had our orange jacket on. We know racing and trackdays are daunting, but we want to help."

This man was born to talk bikes. He was probably born to race them first and foremost, but a seized bike in Belgium put pay to his early promise as a teenager in the Grand Prix paddock. Since then he's done the next best thing, and utterly immersed himself in bikes. Thanks to the entire family being bitten by the bug, this was the dynasty's destiny. "I'm only slipstreaming in what my parents built up," offers Clive, speaking on behalf of everyone in the family that work in the business. Customers are based across the country, staff are loyal (the workshop manager has just retired after 28 years), as are his riders. "On

Racebikes for all

Christmas eve, a van turns up and it's Hutchy delivering his Christmas card to us. He's not ridden for us for four years." That's a mark of both men.

But talk always returns to the bikes. Snippets of our conversation talk about one of the bikes that was shipped over to Daytona in 1974 for Agostini to use as his number two machine. Clive then points out a scrutineering sticker from a 200-mile race at Paul Ricard. There are references to the shop supporting Hailwood's comeback. Clive



Old new or new new?





Pride of place is this eye wateringly pretty NSR500 v-twin



"Stick a ton down now and I'll let you take it away..."



knows the provenance of everything in the shop, from the VF1000 that's in the window attracting admiring looks to the NSR500 v-twin whose tyres were put to one side while it raced, and adorn the beautiful machine now it's restored. It's a spellbinding machine...

Yes, racing is pronounced in the shop, why wouldn't it be, but it's the same place that you'll get your NC700 serviced – and while it's being tinkered with it'll probably be sat next to the YZR500 that Bruce Anstey raced at the Classic TT last year. As Clive says, "It's

our job now to make people realise that we're here to sell bikes! That's our bread and butter. We're not just a team, we're a shop. To keep the likes of McGuinness and Anstey on track, we've got to be out selling bikes Monday to Saturday," to keep the Padgett's fire burning.

Shop first, racers joint first...



The history boys



Ah, the good old days...

For Sale at Padgett's

Like any self-respecting bike shop, Padgett's possesses a spares department. But this is a spares department like no other – not even manufacturers have access to some of this stuff. Not throwing anything away has its advantages in this age of eBay. So we asked Clive to pull out 10 items that sum the shop up – and this is the eclectic mix that he came up with...

FS1-E TANK

"Right then, here's an FS1-E purple tank from, I don't know when. It's in its Yamaha wrapping still, just like it was when it was delivered to us. It's brand new and if you look it's still got the plug in the top to stop all the crap getting in. It probably came in around 1974 now I've had time to think. Not so long ago, a guy came in to buy one, and I had two gold ones to choose from so I put them on the counter. One had very little paint on it, because that's how Yamaha painted them. And one had an actual hair in the lacquer, and that's the one the guy wanted because it had that extra bit of authenticity!"



HRC WIRING LOOM

"This is a modern HRC wiring loom for a CBR600RR. People love anything with HRC on it. They always have. This is on the shelf ready for someone to come in or phone up and buy. The ECU's about too, because you really need the two together. If anyone wanted to build a race bike I can get everything they needed off the shelf today. Phone on Monday and we could build you a superstock bike by Friday from stuff in stock."



LC250/350 HEADLIGHT

"Ah, now this is coming out of its box for the first time – a new headlight. But these things are still for sale. We've gone from brand new HRC kit to this. We find that pricing works its own level out. It once had an RRP but now it's worth what someone will pay for it. We put one on the net before Christmas and it went for something like £150. That's the thing, if you put it on auction no-one can ever say that Padgett's lifted my leg. They decided the level."



SUZUKI RG500 EXHAUSTS

"There's the original Suzuki part number, right there. And we do sell these, if you'll look in the workshop we've got an RG500 that we originally built, and it's come back again! People acquire them and need bits for them. It was a commercial venture for Suzuki then, so it needed the spares back-up. We've got two new brake discs in the packet ready to go on, and this is all stuff that we've got on the shelf. Genuine bolts, washers, fairing stays, we've got it all."



YEC R6 KIT ECU

"Much like HRC, we've got stock of all sorts of race kit parts for Yamaha. We've seen that the supersport stuff has gone off the boil a bit, but that's the way things go, we've seen lots of things go in and out of fashion over the years."



TZ350 CRANK

"This is circa 1974. It will actually fit a TZ from 1972 to 1981. It's a genuine Yamaha TZ350 racing crankshaft. I've been through a lot of these in my life. It's out of the box because we put one on eBay recently. Within 20 minutes of it being up we sold it."



PADGETT'S REARSETS

"We should probably make more noise about things like this, but we've only got ourselves to blame. We commission people to go out and make certain bespoke parts, like these rearsets. We've not got the facilities in house to do this, but they are made to our specification so we know that they'll work at 190mph at the TT."



HONDA FIREBLADE HRC CAMSHAFT

"There's some more stuff from HRC, it's such lovely stuff in its own right, but comes from the factory that has such intimate knowledge of the bike it's going in."



VALVOLINE

"They've been great people to work with and I've been really impressed with the product. I wouldn't be working with them if the product wasn't up to the standard we need in racing. So that's why we're selling it in the shop. They've obviously big in the USA, but we're doing our bit so that they can grow over here too."

CHAIN, SPROCKETS AND ARROW CAN

"This is all stuff that we use on the race bikes, so why wouldn't we sell it as well? That's something that we firmly believe in, and that's what makes racing such a good showcase for us. We use these products to build customers' bikes. We've built relationships with the suppliers over the years, and we like doing business with them."



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Used Bike Guide

SUPER-DOOPER

KTM's excellent and utterly hysterical to ride big supermoto is an absolute used gem...



2005-07 KTM 950 SM



Every now and then we in the UK gets it right when the rest of Europe totally misses the point. Take strong, continental lager, for example. In the UK we understand the importance of fitting a full pint into a glass while over the channel they seem to give both the amber nectar and froth equal billing in the vessel. It's fairly clear who is in the right in this case, which is probably why us Brits can get steaming drunk while the Europeans tend to simply get merry. And that's what happened with the KTM 950SM. We supped it up, while Europe wasn't fussed.

Launched in 2005, the SM was KTM's second large capacity road bike behind the 950 Adventure. Sticking with what the firm knew best, the Austrian nutters took the LC8 V-twin and popped it in a big supermoto chassis, creating (arguably) the first 'proper' big supermoto. Although Ducati had unveiled the Multistrada a few years before, it was aimed far more at the touring market and



PRICE GUIDE: £3,500 - £5,000

Cheapest private: £3,495
17,071 miles, 2006 model with slight cosmetic damage.

Our choice private: £3,995
15,000 miles, orange bike with crash protectors and an Akrapovic exhaust

Cheapest dealer: £3,399
25,495 miles, black bike, service history and with a top box fitted.

Our choice dealer: £4,495
6,634 miles, orange bike in fantastic condition with stainless end cans.

Assume the position!

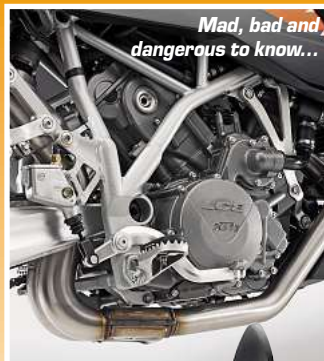


VARIATIONS

The 990SMT was introduced in 2009 and featured a small nose fairing, pannier mounts, a screen and a few other touring-orientated extras. This bike replaced the 990SM in KTM's range for 2010, gained ABS as standard in 2011 and was discontinued in 2013. The 990SMR was made from 2007 until 2013 and featured uprated suspension, a smaller petrol tank and more powerful Brembo brakes.

MODEL UPDATE

The 950SM was updated in 2007 to become the 990SM. As well as the obvious increase in capacity from 942cc to 999cc, the new model also gained fuel-injection. The SM was updated once again in 2009 with the latest version of the LC8 engine before being discontinued in 2010.



Mad, bad and dangerous to know...



This wheels gets more use than the front...

OIL LEVEL

The SM, like other KTM models, has a dry sump design of motor that requires the oil level to be checked when the engine is hot rather than cold – as with a wet sump bike. A lot of people get this wrong and either over or under fill the bike. Check the oil level and be wary of an under-filled machine.

ENGINE	Type	942cc, liquid-cooled, 8v, V-twin
	Bore x stroke	100 x 60mm
	Compression	11.5:1
	Fuelling	2 x Keihin 43mm carbs
	Tested Power	93bhp @ 9,300rpm
	Tested Torque	83Nm @ 6,300rpm

CHASSIS	Frame	Tubular steel trellis
	F Suspension	48mm WP inverted forks, fully-adjustable
	R suspension	WP monoshock, fully-adjustable
	Front brakes	Four-piston radial Brembo calipers, 305mm discs
	Rear brake	Two-piston caliper, 240mm disc

DIMENSIONS	Wheelbase	1,510mm
	Seat Height	885mm
	Dry Weight	191kg
	Fuel Capacity	17-litres

SPEED	0-60	3.46s
	0-100	8.01sec
	0-150	13.08sec
	Stg 1/4 mile	11.87sec @ 116.48mph
	Standing mile	32.47sec @ 138.82mph
	Top speed	141mph

CRASH DAMAGE

The SM doesn't crash very well, so be very cautious of any machine that shows crash damage. The rider's footpegs are mounted directly to the frame and even a low speed incident can cause this mounting point to fracture.



It looked a bit like a Dyson vacuum cleaner anyway.

The SM was exactly what it promised to be – a large capacity supermoto with 17-inch wheels, quality suspension and a fierce braking set-up. On the face of it this should have been enough to put most riders off; after-all, supermotors are the true Marmite bikes of the two-wheeled world. But with the KTM something very unexpected happened, riders in the UK appreciated the SM for what it was, not its family history. We took the 950SM to our hearts while across Europe they were generally far less impressed. Who was right? Us, obviously...

If you get a chance to ride a 950SM then snap it up, although a test ride does come with a word of caution. The SM, much like the superb 1050 Triumph Speed Triple, is one of those bikes that is so much fun to ride you almost inevitably go back for more. In giving a supermoto a hefty dose of steroids, KTM created a bike that is absolutely purpose built for the UK's roads. Crucially, however, they did this while not forgetting that a bike needs to be fun to ride and also possess some practicality.

Sit on the 950SM and your first thoughts are that it's anything but small and svelte. The bodywork is chunky, the bars are simply huge

and the tank bulbous. The long seat is fairly well padded, but due to its off-road styling you are often caught in two minds as to how to sit on it. Do you go for a motocross pushed over the headstock stance or slide further back in a more traditional road bike way? In all honesty it doesn't matter that much as once you hit the starter the riding position is the last thing on your mind.

KTM certainly knows how to make a thumping V-twin and the LC8 engine in its carburettor form is a cracker. The updated 990 fuel-injected version is no slouch, but there is something about two huge carbs feeding a motor that gives it

a unique feel and character, not to mention a near perfect throttle response. From very low down in the rev range the LC8 motor surges forward, picking up momentum that culminates in a chunky amount of drive between 6 and 8,000rpm. It's a motor that makes you smile every time and is as happy cruising around at low revs as it is being hammered to its limiter. Aside from a clunky gearbox (KTM then seemed unable to build a decent 'box) there's little to complain about – and if wheelies are your thing then look no further than the SM. However, cornering isn't quite such a strong point. ☹



*Pipe dreams?
Not quite...*



*The bars are a
long way above...*

CARB BALANCE

Any big V-twin is susceptible to out of balance carbs (or throttle bodies), so if the SM you are looking at has a rough tickover or poor throttle response, assume it needs a good service and its carbs professionally balanced.

LEAKS

Both the clutch slave cylinder and water-pump seal like to spring the occasional leak on the 950SM, so have a good look out for any signs of fluid loss in these areas.

TECHNICAL IMPROVEMENTS

KTM continually release 'technical improvements' to their model range. These aren't recalls, but often involve the bike being updated or improved in some way for free when it is serviced. If the bike hasn't been to a KTM dealer these won't get done, so always try and buy a bike that has a degree of KTM service history.

CAM CHAIN TENSIONERS

Listen out for a clatter that might indicate one of the hydraulic cam chain tensioners is on its way out when you first start the bike. It's a fairly common issue and only costs about £30 for a new tensioner, but if left unchecked can result in some fairly substantial engine damage.



SERVICING

The SM needs its valve clearances checked every 9,000 miles, which can result in a hefty service bill of nearly £500 and, therefore, often gets skipped. Always check this work has been completed.

“KTM CERTAINLY KNOWS HOW TO BUILD A THUMPING V-TWIN, AND THE LC8 ENGINE IS THE SM IS A CRACKER...”



You stick your right leg out....

ALSO CONSIDER THESE:

DUCATI HYPERMOTARD 1100

2007

Private
£4,200

Dealer
£4,500

Air-cooled supermoto stupidity from Ducati. Sporty and agile to ride but not as practical or comfortable as the KTM, so think SM first.

Engine 1078cc, a/c, 8v, desmo twin
Power 90bhp @ 7,750rpm
Torque 103Nm @ 4,750rpm



TRIUMPH TIGER 1050

2007

Private
£3,800

Dealer
£4,300

A bit big and bouncy, but like the Speed Triple the Tiger's charm has a funny way of winning you over. The 1050cc engine is a hearty beast.

Engine 1050cc, l/c, 12v inline triple
Power 120bhp @ 9,100rpm
Torque 104Nm @ 8,700rpm



APRILIA DORSODURO 750

2008

Private
£4,200

Dealer
£4,800

A fairly frantic supermoto, the Dorsoduro is best used as a back lane blaster or city hacker rather than a mile-muncher. Consider the 1200 version.

Engine 749cc, l/c, 8v, V-twin
Power 79bhp @ 8,750rpm
Torque 73Nm @ 4,500rpm



RUNNING COSTS

Service interval:
Minor: 4,500m
Major: 9,000m
Valve clearances: 9,000m

Service costs:
Minor: £245.00
Major: £475.00

Right fairing: £40.26

RH Engine casing: £131.70

Brake lever: £77.52

» Supermotos always come with long travel suspension and despite the KTM's WP units being top quality, the fact they have so much travel tends to make the SM wallow in turns. Get used to this trait and you can still tramp on a bit, but you need to understand that any hefty application of brake or throttle will result in a bit of pitching. A quick burst of adjuster twiddling can help minimise the roll, but in all truth it's better to put up with it and retain the SM's refinement on uneven roads rather than attempt to turn it into something it doesn't want to be. This is a bike to be ridden, enjoyed, and then ridden again with an even bigger smile on your face.

In the current age of monster power claims and electronic control, the 950SM is a welcome reminder of what makes two-wheels so special. It's a bike all about the simple joy of riding and manages to blend practicality and performance perfectly into one beautifully balanced package. OK, the gearbox is a bit poor and the suspension soft, but in the grand scheme of things it doesn't detract from what is basically a bloody brilliant bike. **EB**

Verdict 8/10

If you want to take things easier yet not sacrifice wheelies, the SM is for you.

➤ FUN FACTOR, PRACTICALITY, WHEELIES!
➤ BOUNCY SUSPENSION, POOR GEARBOX.

The end(o)...





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BRAND OF BROTHERS

BMW

After kicking things off with Aprilia, the next in the alphabet is Bimota. But that's not going to happen, so BMW it is!

WORDS: ROOTSY PICS: FB ARCHIVE

Had we been writing this ten years ago then we might have struggled to recommend many bikes from the BMW stable. But a revolution stormed the Bavarian castle in the mid-noughties, meaning the bikes emerging from Germany were becoming ever more relevant. Racier incarnations of traditional BMW fare were the first signs of a sporting Spring, then more focused machines took over after this transitional period. Here's the best of the bunch.



2008 HP2 SPORT

WHY YOU NEED ONE: This is the blueprint for all things sporty

PRICES: Prices will start from £11,000, and haggling will be light...

No-one quite knew what to expect when BMW announced that it was suddenly going all sporty after years of honest diligence in producing bikes that were anything but. The HP2 Sport was a massive talking point when it was unveiled in 2007, and for lots of different reasons. Offering radical solutions to hitherto unknown problems, the bike was an experiment on wheels, offering tech, engineering, components and materials the likes of which we'd never seen before.

But there was no getting away from its seemingly staid powerplant – the ancient air-cooled Boxer motor from the GS, albeit with an added camshaft that would later be adopted by the GS. Still, how could anything so antiquated propel the trick bits to meaningful speeds and thus justify the Sport tag BMW had given it? The R 1200 S, which the bike was loosely based on, had only the sporting pedigree of a paid-for race series in MotoGP. So what was the crack?

Well, it wasn't just a GS engine. BMW worked hard to extract nearly 40 per cent more power from the block. There was a switch to a double overhead cam system, the valves were rearranged

radially, made larger and actuated by a dedicated camshaft for both inlet and exhaust, while a close ratio gearbox was used and this combined to the first quickshifter to be fitted to a production bike. The result? A sky high (for a Boxer lump) rev ceiling of 9,500rpm and a claimed 133bhp. Now we're talking...

While radical experiments were going on inside the engine, more BMW-like solutions existed on the outside. The HP2 Sport was still using the shaft drive of the Paralever system and the Telelever suspension at the front was still being gainfully employed – albeit with Öhlins springs at either end. Spanking new, train-stopping Brembo Monoblock brakes were stunningly effective, while elements like the forged aluminium wheels, carbon fibre bodywork and monocoque seat, underseat exhaust, WSB-spec 2D dash and beautifully milled billet all helped to reach its

178kg weight – and justify the near £15k price tag.

The culmination of all these elements was a bike that some gelled with, but others hated. The inherent feelings generated by the suspension put many off, while others would rather invest in a KTM RC8 or Ducati 1098 and get a bit of change, too. But on a smooth track, the HP2 Sport offered fun all the way to the cylinder heads. Of course, it could have done with more top end, free cylinder head covers and not necessitating filling it with 98 Ron each time, but there was a middleweight punch to the bike and an idiosyncratic air about it that raised more than the odd eyebrow.

Of course, how could we have known that the HP2 Sport was a softening up exercise for BMW before launching the S 1000 RR to us. The bike was made to show the seriousness of BMW's intentions, to develop trust in sporting solutions. But is that it or





But regardless of hue, they all do this...



BMW has offered some funny old colours.....

2010 S 1000 RR

WHY YOU NEED ONE: Because you're sick of Japan taking the piss

PRICES: Get in on the ground floor at £8k

Though you'll have read all about BMW's latest and greatest superbike (the 2015 version), there are plenty of proper reasons to delve into the used market to pick yourself up a bargain. The Beemer was the one success of the austerity era, and so sales verged on rampant while they collapsed elsewhere. Offering the full compliment of electronic equipment, as well as ball busting power and supersport-like chassis dimensions, you'll only notice the refinements of the new bike at the very edge of the performance envelope. There's not a £7k gap in ability.

Prices are still strong. Owners know that they've got the best bike on the block, and they're priced accordingly. Almost every owner was upsold the packages that went with the base bike by gleeful sales staff, meaning that a bike will be loaded with the DTC, quickshifter and likely adorned with an Akrapovic or Austin Racing can and a few splashes of carbon.

By now you should know how the bike performs when let loose. If not, think CBR600RR powered by a Ten Kate superbike motor. But it's also polite, economical and pretty reliable given the temptation to flog it at every opportunity. Owners will have treated their pride and joy to all the servicing it requires (once a year/6,000 miles – but check the 'box'), and while a few have been round Europe, most keep within the confines of the country – with the occasional affray to the track thrown in for good measure. Motorsport colours will command a higher price.

can the HP2 Sport be seen in its own light?

It can, and those brave enough to make the leap were rewarded with a cultured ride. Few are ever offered up for resale, and those that are, are mint low milers. There were scare stories about a 30,000 mile rebuild, but as ever the truth reveals that though the parts are expensive, it's not the £5k bill many thought it might be. Just over 2,000 were made, and many adorn dining rooms and live life under covers. They don't appear regularly on Gumtree alongside £500 motors, and when they do come up for sale they typically command strong figures. They won't have much mileage on them, and have the potential to reach classic status in (many) years to come. But if you want something that's the antithesis of the Universal Japanese Motorcycle, then you might have just found it. Park one up and people won't stop talking to you – and how many times do you say that about a BMW from this era?



Brilliant looks, radical solutions, ace dynamics. This HP is seriously saucy...

*Not pretty, but
certainly effective*



2009: K 1300 S

WHY YOU NEED ONE: There's too much to see in the world
PRICES: £6,000 should see you right.

While the Japanese were quietly forgetting to update their hyper sports bikes, the Germans finally got round to building theirs – although starts couldn't have been more ignominious than that of the K 1200 S. Sub standard camshafts, dodgy design and iffy fuel injection experienced on the launch required the recall of 900 bikes that had been sent to dealers and delayed the launch of the bike so that the S emerged six months later than planned. This is not the ruthless German efficiency we were all expecting...

But this all changed once the bike was into production proper, and with the capacity boost to 1,293cc in 2009, the K 1300 S became a true Gentleman's Express. The inline four may have been alien to BMW, but it certainly felt more natural to those wanting 160mph-plus performance. Low speed manners may have been a little more stilted because of the fuel injection and shaft drive, but the faster you went, the better the S gets. Its 165bhp is handsome enough, and though it runs out of puff in terms of terminal velocity, its real world speeds are more than healthy – although things can get a little vibey on long cruises across the continent.

BMW's insistence on using the Duolever and Paralever suspension combo isn't to everyone's tastes, but there's no denying it works until you're going far faster through a turn than any hyper sports bike was ever designed to go. Added to the brakes that don't match the power of the motor, there are chinks in the BMW's armour. Many are masked by the array of electronics (the



*Despite appearances, you
can hustle the 1300...*

K series use BMW's ASC traction control system), while the more a bike is specced, the more gizmos are attached.

Expect nothing but well looked after machines with little in the way of issues. The motors are almost unbreakable, so its usually niggly things like switches that can cause consternation. Given its remit, don't be afraid that miles have been stuck on one. So go ahead and buy one – and send us a postcard from the other side of Europe...

2003 R 1100 S BOXER CUP

WHY YOU NEED ONE: You've got the skills to hustle this tank around

PRICE: £5,000 should get you a decent one

If you're looking for a MotoGP replica, a machine that has done battle on some of the world's greatest tracks and performed in front of thousands of delighted fans, then the closest you're going to get is the R 1100 S Boxer Cup Replica, a bike that BMW let loose on the track before it built more apt machines for the job. The Boxer Cup was a support series to MotoGP in the early part of the millennium, and the racing proved that BMW's could go round tracks like they did in the olden days to such great effect. While this generation of machine was more cajoled into performing, it's still

testament to its abilities that it could get round at a respectable pace.

The base bike for racing was the R 1100 S, a half-faired bike powered by the Bavarian Boxer motor. Big, comfortable and impressively torquy, this Boxer could land a decent punch if provoked. To celebrate winning the series, BMW produced a limited range of Boxer Cup replica bikes that transformed the dowdy image of the stocker and made it an object of desire, something not attributed to a BMW for, well, ever.

There are plenty of the stock bikes in the showrooms, but you'll have to



Not the most desirable race-rep, but full of ability on track...

hunt harder for the replica bike. For additional investment, you get the looks, but also a bit more in the way of shove, thanks to the Laser underseat exhaust system, an ECU, a sprinkling of carbon fibre, gaudy bellypan and brake lines. Then it

costs you £9,500; expect to pay around half that now. Your next task is then to go and book a trackday where your stated aim should be to touch the cylinder head covers down. If you don't, you've got to hand the bike back...

OTHERS

2010 F 800 R

WHY: It's a grade-A stunter!

PRICE: £4,000 for a 10-plate

Fruity when you give it the berries, frugal when not, the F 800 R offers many things to a disparate group of people. From Christ Pfeiffer to the common commuter, the F 800 R is an honest answer to lots of questions...



2007 K 1200 R

WHY: Big, Bavarian and beefy

PRICE: £3,500 is a bargain!

Effectively a naked S model, a few geometry changes and some muscular styling created the R. It's an alternative to the usual suspects, and for a time the most powerful naked you could buy...



2007 HP2 MEGA MOTO

WHY: We don't know!

PRICE: Offer £8k and see what happens

An utterly loopy machine, like the HP2 Sport, but made for those of a motard persuasion. It's surprisingly light on its feet and infinitely more interesting than yet another GS...



Riding



THE CALIFORNIA SUPERBIKE SCHOOL

Founded by the legendary Keith Code in 1980, the California Superbike School offers a step-by-step method of technique oriented rider training in the art of cornering motorcycles. Over the past 30 years hundreds of thousands of students have improved their riding skills and cornering capabilities at CSS and their team of professional coaches are dedicated to your improvement.



ASSUMING THE POSITION

How you sit on a bike has a massive impact on how a bike reacts. Get it right and the bike works with you...

The first thing I notice about any rider is form — what does he or she look like on the bike? How does he sit? What's her posture? Is it comfortable or awkward, stiff or loose, MotoGP or nervous novice? Good body positioning isn't only about style, but function. It must provide the rider harmony with, and control over, the bike with the minimum possible effort. A gear shift lever set a quarter of an inch too high or too low, for example, can force a rider into awkward readjustments of his entire body.

Even with perfect control settings, good sport-cornering form has its difficulties. Achieving it may look and even feel like it's

reserved for the young and flexible. This may be true to a degree, but many of the problems are actually brought on by our Survival Reactions (SRs). For example, a rider who is improperly trying to level the horizon simply by tilting his head can create a stiff and twisted positioning on the bike.

Aside from any SRs, good form is difficult for riders who are struggling with their basics because it does not address or improve 90 per cent of the most fundamental and vital aspects of riding; a sense of traction, speed, lean angle, braking and line. Uncertainty about these basics has a physical manifestation — they transfer to the rider's body

positioning in awkward ways. Good coaching can get to the root cause, and it's necessary that what the rider is doing feels right.

Upon seeing photos of themselves, riders often express disappointment, "I certainly felt leaned over a lot further... Are my knees that far from the deck? I was right down on the tank, nearly under the paint..." At least it felt that way to them!

Until we solve it, SRs connected with leaning over kick in and begin to distort our senses once we begin tilting the world. Good cornering form is not an end unto itself, but gives us another guideline. Good form helps good riding to become more fluid and efficient. While

CONTACT CSS TO BOOK: TEL 08700 671061 EMAIL INFO@SUPERBIKESCHOOL.CO.UK WEB WWW.SUPERBIKESCHOOL.CO.UK



Got a riding question - either on the track or on the road? Want the CSS team to help? Just drop us a line and we'll get it answered for you. letters@fastbikesmag.com




ALL THE CSS COACHES HAVE SPENT YEARS HONING THEIR RIDING, AND ARE PERFECTLY PLACED TO ANSWER YOUR RIDING QUESTIONS. SO DON'T BE SHY, ASK AWAY!

body position isn't the panacea some think it is, it has its place. For example, holding the body upright, counter to the bike's lean while cornering, has several negative results such as positioning the rider so he can't relax.

Which brings us to our primary rule of body positioning; stability comes in pairs. Keith Code's First Law of Body Position states that bike and rider stability are always paired – rider instability transfers directly to the bike. Body positioning has but one critical and basic function; rider stability. How a rider connects to the bike can bring about harmony, control and ease of movement or turn the ride into an uncoordinated wrestling match.

Having stability and freedom of movement sounds conflicting. When something is stable it's expected to stay put – unmoving, like the foundation of your house or the roots of a tree. But the opposite is true while riding. Once a rider's individual problems are dissected and properly coached, stability brings about harmony with the bike, freedom of movement on it, and precision control of it – with minimum effort.

MotoGP techniques are often shown to newish riders, and that's fine for setting the stage on body position. But without a subjective understanding of why, how and what the pros went through to get there, it easily becomes disappointing for the student looking at his photos. I can't fault anyone for wanting a decent trophy photo with their knee down on the deck! 

ROLL IT ON THE FAT ONE...



And squish that rear hoop...

Q I often hear commentators say that the riders are 'picking the bike up on to the fat part of the tyre' but looking at photos, the tyres seem to squish out more when leant over than when upright. Which is true? **Ben, Bath**

A If anyone is old enough to remember tyres like the Avon Speedmaster then the commentators would once have had a point. But with modern tyres, you are correct. Cornering

forces do push down and distort the tyres making them 'fatter' while leant over. What the riders gain from picking the bike up is a tyre less likely to slide out if it starts to spin and is something that works on the road too. Rather than just having the bike come up slowly out of the turn, try pulling on the inside bar (after all, you pushed that bar to make it lean in didn't you?) and the bike will stand up quicker, potentially saving you from a buttock clenching slide.



Trust the front, even in the wet...

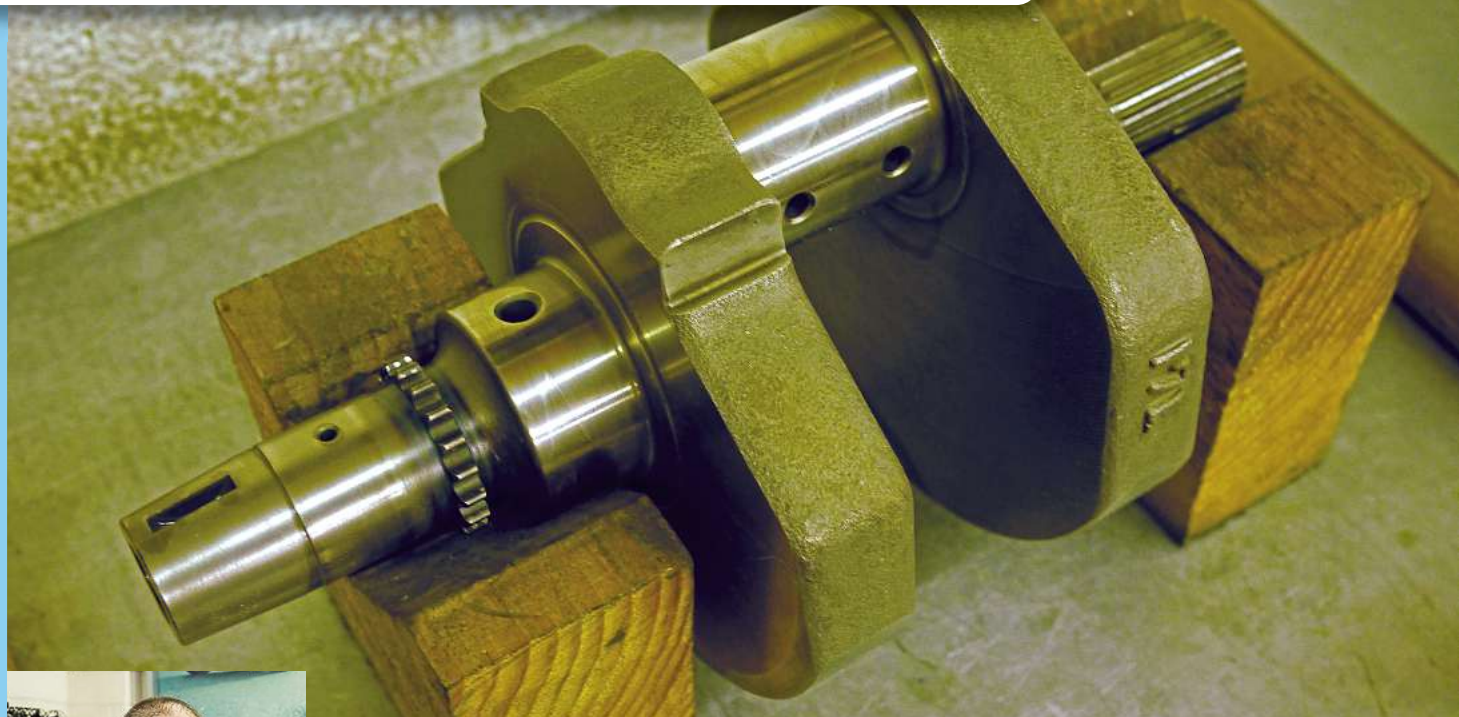
YOU'VE GOT TO ROLL WITH IT

Q I know I should 'roll the throttle through the corner' but I'm terrified of losing the front if I do. I have been told it's safer holding the clutch in, especially in slower corners but I'm not convinced either way. **Martin, Durham**

A The number one cause of losing the front is overloading the relatively small (compared to the rear) contact patch while leaning

over. This is often caused by holding some brake on while at full lean (which may be 59 degrees on a MotoGP bike or 10 degrees in the wet on a greasy road), but even coasting can transfer enough weight forward to ask too much of the tyre. By getting back to gas you can transfer just enough weight back on to the bigger rear tyre to give the front the ideal load for maximum traction, even if you're riding in poor conditions.

Technical



JHS RACING OWNER/BIG CHEESE

James Holland runs JHS Racing in Keynsham, and he is our go to guy whenever we need a bike looking at. JHS Racing was set up in the mid 1990s and has since expanded as its reputation has grown. The workshop deals with everything, from scooters to superbikes. Having built and worked on race Suzuki SVs and Triumph 675s James has a wealth of knowledge with these bikes, but elsewhere James' knowledge is as extensive as it gets. So from tyre fitting to MOTs, from dyno work to suspension, James really does do it all. And here he is, passing on his years in the business to Fast Bikes readers!



THE MEAT OF THE MOTOR

In the second part of our engine tuning series we look where you can make your engine stronger - the bottom-end. No laughing at the back...

Last month we talked about the top-end, and relatively big performance gains for not a lot of outlay. This month it's about bottom-end business, and we've got a different scenario.

You can go so far here, but it ain't worth going any further unless you've got deep pockets because spending big money on the bottom-end doesn't always reap big rewards. You're putting money into an engine's bottom-end to gain strength, not horsepower. You don't want to up your compression ratio and spend all your money on a higher state

of tune, only to find out your rod will only last 500 miles...

If you're building a normally aspirated engine to use on a trackday with that magic 200bhp figure, you'll have to have that engine refreshed every year. And you'll have to expect, depending on mileage, to put a crankshaft in there, or you might have to put pistons in. You get piston and bore wear with higher compression forces and faster changes of direction, and there are things like ring flutter taking place, so this wears out aluminium and other internals.



Give your bike a treat!

Superbike engines can cost nearly £100k if you do the job properly. It'll cost £2,500 for titanium rods alone, but that's an entry price - you can throw £10k at a set of rods, no problem at all. If you came in and wanted the crank checked, superfinished, new shells, balanced, fresh con-rods and pistons, it won't be cheap.

For the everyday rider on the road, it's about utilising what you've already got and getting the best without costing a fortune. It goes back to the same old thing I've talked about before; if you're going to do an engine, do an all-new one. Secondhand motors with up to 12,000 miles, no problem; do the top-end, but don't waste money on polishing a turd.

Let's start from the top (of the bottom). There are sandcast



CONTACT JHS RACING: TEL 0117 986 8844 EMAIL JHSRACING@LINEONE.NET WEB WWW.JHSRACING.CO.UK



Don't con your rods...

pistons, there are forged pistons, and you can even get billet aluminium pistons – but they are very specialist! Most of the modern standard supersports bikes will come with forged pistons, as the bike will be punished at high revs and sandcast pistons cannot stand that amount of abuse.

Your budget end of the range will have sandcast pistons. Once you get into the sportier spectrum, they will have forged pistons. A lot of the manufacturers use ART (Suzuki, Triumph, etc), who make nice pistons, but they can be massively improved upon. Being mass-produced, there are always financial and quality constraints.

The likes of CP, Wiseco and JE all make exquisite aftermarket pistons and the quality is dramatically higher than OEM stuff, featuring friction reduction and compression ratio values, along with other special qualities like anti-detonation rings. They also have a number of other benefits over OEM – they can make the piston lighter, they have deeper valve pockets that allow run higher lift cams (so you don't have valve-to-piston problems), and skirt coatings among other things.

For arguments sake, if we take a GSX-R1000, and an aftermarket high-compression piston is made (raising it from 13:1 to 14:1), it'll have the same bore size, same gudgeon pin, and weight-for-weight it'll be pretty similar, but the design will allow for slightly bigger valves and slightly bigger



Piston broke? Tell us about it, hic!

cams to be used. So the pocket will be bigger and deeper to make that allowance.

Making the pistons lighter gives less inertia and less work for the rest of the engine. If you make the piston lighter, you're going to change the balance of the engine, too.

You also need to think about the friction side of things. It may be the case that you keep the piston weight the same but reduce the friction, so skirts can be changed and DLC-coatings can be applied. Gudgeon pins play a big part – they're not just straight pins. Good pins will have a conical end to keep integral strength, but ensure lightness too.

If you order a piston from a manufacturer for a specific model, unless it's very specialised, that piston will be absolutely spot on and give no issues whatsoever. You can just upgrade pistons if you want. You may not have the money to do con-rods as well. For a four-cylinder bike, you're looking at around £500 for pistons alone, then fitting on top.

We tend to put packages together, because when you break down individual stuff it gets very expensive. Nine times out of ten, if we build an engine for supersport racing, you can't change the pistons anyway – and that's why OEM stuff, particularly in the last few years, has become very good quality.

At the highest level of production racing in the world, the engines are very close to standard, so you can't change



If you're going to get all gynaecological with your machine, you need skill, parts and pockets to suit...

PROPER TOOLS

ESSENTIAL WORKSHOP KIT



James gasps everytime he opens this... As does his missus – £400!

Snap-On Digi wrench

■ If you've used a torque wrench, you'll know how important they are – and how fiddly they can be. I saw this Snap-On digital 3/8 wrench in the truck and knew I had to have it, even though it cost me £400. It has the obvious features, like lb/ft and Nm functionality, but it's also really easy to use. It's essential for delicate jobs like cylinder head bolts and other engine bits, and I'm a bit of a tart so love the digi contraptions.

pistons, con-rods, cranks, nothing. That's primarily why the components are so good nowadays.

Moving down, the main benefits to upgrading con-rods is strength and lightness, but also non-stretch properties. We would change a set of con-rods in an engine, not just for performance, but also because the OEM rods aren't exactly bulletproof, especially if it's been spanked on a circuit regularly.

It's the same with con-rods as it is with pistons. The more expensive, sportier bikes have all the heat treatment and forged properties, and all the attention to detail is spot on. There are steel rods, aluminium rods and titanium rods, but there are different sectors within those three – you can get hot forged, cold forged, cast and on and on. The reason we sometimes use aluminium rods are due to lightness and cost effectiveness, but also with aluminium, you have a certain amount of stretching – when you heat aluminium it expands.

It's the same with steel – if you take a standard OEM rod and heat it, you need to know how much it will stretch. That's why we have to work out cylinder head clearances, to allow for the movement in material.

It's the reason why titanium rods are so expensive – not only because of the material, it's generally as light as aluminium and as strong as steel, but its

stretching potential is so much less than other materials. All top-spec standard engines these days are using titanium rods, as you can tighten clearances and have a smaller squish, which means a better bang.

If you went from a steel rod to a titanium rod, you'll need to change the crank accordingly, as your rotating mass has just been reduced. When it comes to rebalancing a crank, there are manufacturers' plus and minus tolerances to adhere to.

The idea of the crank is to move one reactional force into another reactional force, so a downward force into a rotational force, and you don't necessarily want a lighter crank. Some cranks now want weight on them. The common misconception is that you take weight off a crank to make them lighter and spin a bit faster, but those days are long gone.

These manufacturers are clever little buggers. It's not so much about removing weight but balancing weight between the journals (where the bearings sit). So you may have a gear on one side of the crankshaft but won't be on the other, so you have to work out the balance between the right plane and the left plane.

Of course, you'll get power gains with tuning/rebuilding the bottom-end, but it's mainly all about refining, and spending big. Next month we'll delve into electronics and getting the best out of a tuned motor. **EB**



If you don't know the difference between yokes and yolks, Dzuz and Zeus, or suspension and suspenders – email the experts letters@fastbikes.com

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Legal

AN EX-TRACTOR FAN...

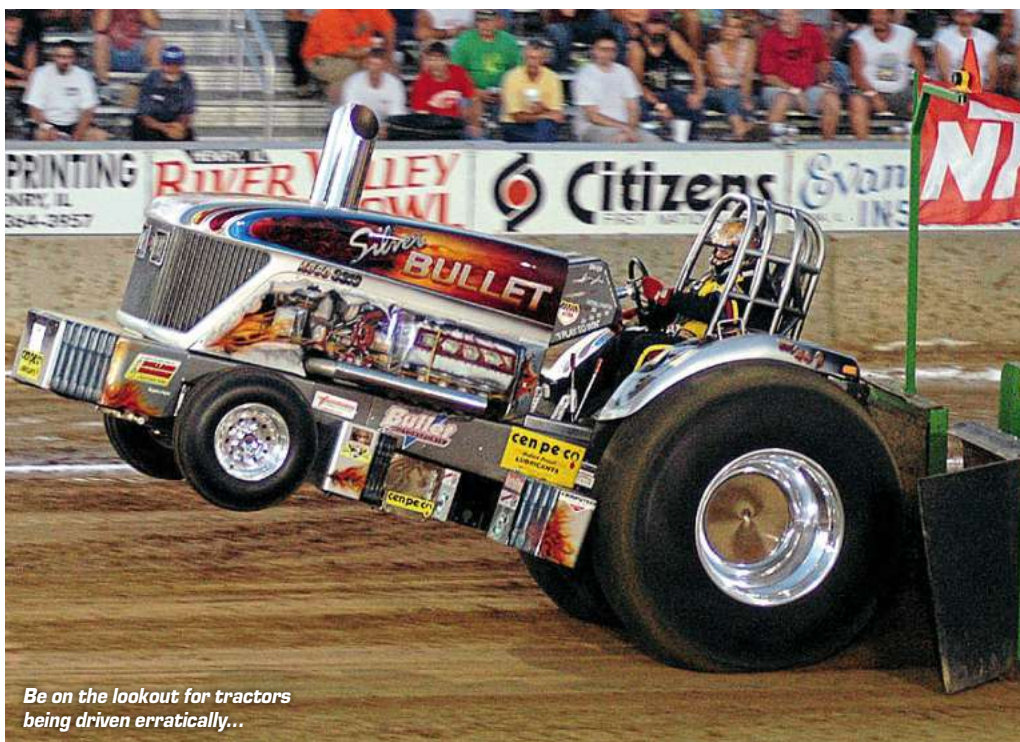
One reader used to rather like tractors, but not after one ran his bike over

Q I stopped for a tea break at a National Trust beauty spot. My bike was knocked down by what looked like a child driving an old tractor. The tractor had a registration plate that I took down, and the Police were called as I was genuinely suspicious that this kid was not old enough to drive a tractor. The police were happy with all of his documents, and I reported the claim to my insurance company who appointed somebody to look after my case. I was completely uninjured, but my bike is third party only with legal cover. My bike had over £3,000 worth of damage, mostly fairing and scuffs to the silencers. My insurance company have had the claim rejected by the farmer's insurers. They have said that the tractor's insurers do not have to pay for the bike because this did not take place on the road and therefore road traffic insurance does not apply and they therefore 'decline to indemnify'. My own claims managers have said that this is correct in law, and they have told me to pay for my repairs myself and put it down to experience. Surely this cannot be right?

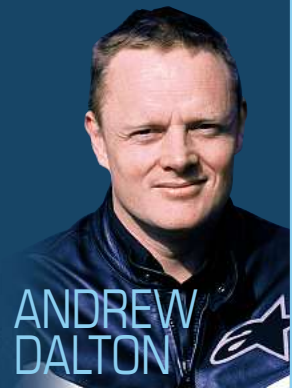
Anon

A It is not right. As a starting point, a 16 year old can drive a small tractor on the road, which is why the Police were not overly excited about a kid driving a tractor. The tractor clearly was insured, by one of the tougher insurers who specialise in farming work. I happen to know the insurers quite well, and they know that if they have got some useless claims factory against them, they will refuse the claim, as indeed they have done here. It works. However, the defence is nonsense in law. The English law has been clear for some time and it has fairly recently been confirmed by the European Court which has said that if any vehicle is being used which is consistent with the normal function of that vehicle (so a tractor being used for agricultural work falls within this) which is being used anywhere, even on private property, is covered. My advice is the same as I give to a number of Fast Bikes readers who have got relatively small claims and no injury. You are better off sacking the claims

insurance and actually bringing your claim through the small claims Court yourself. You need to write to the tractor insurers confirming that you have sacked the people appointed for you by your insurers, tell them what your damages are, wait for the cheque and if you do not get the cheque within 21 days after you have sent them the repair estimate for your bike, issue your claim in the small claims Court, not forgetting to include £25 per week for all the time that your bike has been off the road - as your bike is really only used at the weekends for leisure, you should claim a modest loss of use. I can pretty well guarantee you that the farmer's insurers will pay up. You might want to refer them to a case called *Vnuk v. Triglav* which will at least show that you have carried out some research and you understand what the law is which is more than can be said for your 'emergency claims technical manager' and as a general rule of thumb, the longer the title the less is the qualification. I'm just a solicitor. **EB**



Be on the lookout for tractors being driven erratically...



ANDREW DALTON

PENAL SERVITUDE PREVENTOR

The Fast Bikes Legal Clinic is compiled by Andrew Dalton, and his bike riding barristers and solicitors at White Dalton Motorcycle Solicitors.

They deal with personal injury claims and their sister company, Motor Defence Team, deals with all the motoring offences. They know everything about bike law. Andrew is a former London motorbike courier turned barrister and solicitor, and we know he's good. All the White Dalton lawyers are qualified barristers, or solicitors, or both - and they all have full bike licences, too. They don't act for insurance companies or the prosecution. They are Britain's most specialist law practice, and if they don't know the answer to your question, there probably isn't one. Don't rely on the advice from your insurance appointed solicitor, get proper independent advice.

For road traffic offences call Motor Defence Team 0800 280 0912

Motor Defence Solicitors

For non-offence cases call White Dalton Motorcycle Solicitors 0800 783 6191

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Chatter

★ STAR LETTER

REPORTING IN



I just wanted to say a few words of appreciation for your BMW S 1000 RR launch report in the December issue. Being the proud owner of an original 2010 version, I was looking forward to reading your report on what I regard as a fully re-engineered model for 2015. I must say that I was really impressed with your excellent report; not only humorous, but also very thorough and detailed. I'm potentially in the market to trade up next year, and such a 'complete' report gives me the sort of info I look for in helping me make up my mind. I'll look forward to a similar report on the new R1!

Great magazine guys, and keep up the good work. Best regards.

Steve, email

You're not Steve our new publisher, are you? Anyway, let us know what you make of the R1 report!



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IT'S A TWIN THING

Some bloke was on about Kawasaki building a SuperTwin replica in last month's letters page. I've been banging on about this with my mates for ages. It seems nuts that the Er-6 can be made to look and go as well as it does in this form – but then Kawasaki doesn't want to know about producing them. So long as it was under eight grand, I'd go out and buy one tomorrow. Who do I complain to?

Alastair Webb, Kent

Don't complain to us, send it Team Green's way!



AS SEEN ON TWITTER



@jad1boo

1st ride of the year. Coffee time!
:-) @fastbikesmag



@RobDrage83

The boy is learning the correct skills already! Don't you agree
@fastbikesmag ?



@GBRacingEU

Another great read about this mental machine from the french @fastbikesmag



@675_Matt

Dirty B*tch @fastbikesmag



@EByrner

I did this. Only took me 5 years n'all!



@Nick2Xtreme

@fastbikesmag Xmas day ride to seaside from a couple of years ago. Bit of snow never stopped me!



@terry_bunn

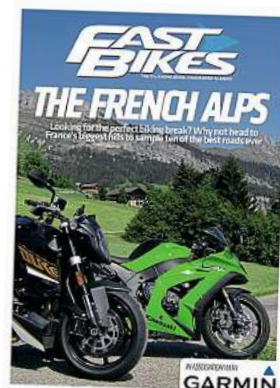
My beautiful @dymagwheels that I won. Thank you @fastbikesmag @dymagwheels. Absolutely #amazing. Impossibly light

TRIP ADVISOR

I am writing this email to let you know we have booked our trip! We are starting in Plymouth and getting the ferry to Roscoff and riding all the way down to Monte Carlo, then across to Santander, through Route Napoleon and then on to the Pyrenees. In itself it's a long trip in a week, but to make it more interesting we are doing the trip on two ZX-10Rs and an R1. We were wondering if you would allow us to do a review to go into your magazine and any advice or help would be grateful many thanks.

Nicholas Smith

Let us know how it goes – and don't worry about going on sportsbikes! I would have got the boat to Spain and then gone across the Pyrenees on the N260. Then I would have gassed it to the roads above Monte Carlo and gone home via the Alps. But don't worry too much about the plan, just follow your nose and have fun! Check out our Alps guide in full on the website.





Want your greatest riding cock-up, triumph, or just the missus' naked form immortalised in these hallowed pages? Email letters@fastbikesmag.com

KIDS' CORNER

This is Kaiden, my four year old grandson, wearing my helmet and gloves riding his bike. I think I need to get him one with an engine...

Paul Bardsley



GIVES YOU WINGS...

Here's an RC51 for your centrefold. There's lots of one off kit on it, such as one off hand

machined radial brake mounts and hand laid fibreglass.
Harry Sallee, USA

CALENDAR GIRLS

Shame there's no tits and arse in the calendar this year. Still, the wife will be a lot happier for the next 12 months.

Dave Prior

We thought there was enough soft porn with this year's bikes...



AS SEEN ON
FACEBOOK



Fast Bikes Magazine: Who's had one of these. And who still wants one!



Alan Darville: Seven years later and still have mine.



Paul Davis: Still got my L2. Love it.



Dean Stanworth: My sister or me have had this P2 for 15 years now.



Chris Campbell: I've had 6... Love them.... They do everything from elbow down to long distance touring.



Szymek Regula: My ZX-7R and ZX-7RR from Poland.



Craig Robertson: And here's me (617), Sean Scott, (64) and my should-know-better dad Neil Robertson at Knockhill last year....#zx7rsrule.



Lyndon Williams: Now have a ZX-7RR fitted with a ZX-9R B model engine The extra 25 horses should be very useful.



Paul Gregory: Here's mine could never part with her but I'm hunting for a set of downpipes ready for summer.



Greg Stewart: Five years, two engines and two gearboxes later.

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Travel



The factory doesn't have this many bikes....

SPRING INTO ACTION ON A BMW

If you've not been on a bike since October, then you're going to be rusty in the ancient art of motorcycle riding. Plus, once you do start to see some action, it's still going to be cold, the roads will be cut up and every man and his dog will be out for a blast. And that's why we took note of what was happening on the F 800 R launch (see page 38). We tagged on to an event run by German trackday hosts, Bike Promotion, who were running the BMW Motorrad Test Camp 2015. Yes, the company does run trackdays, and yes they are German, but in answer to these pertinent points, it not only runs road events, but they cater for us Brits, too.

The thing that got our interest was the fact that they transport down 200 brand new BMWs for

customers to ride. Basing themselves in a half decent hotel on the seaside at Mojacar, those that want to go and play on the nearby Almeria track do so. Those that want to head to the hills and play off road on GS Adventures do that. For everyone else, Bike Promotion offers guided rides of the area, on anything from an S 1000 RR to a nineT – and you're able to swap bikes during the day.

This means that you can ride someone else's bike in the sun on some utterly amazing roads for a few days in deepest, darkest winter. The tour guides were swift and safe, the coffee stops all very pretty and the roads didn't stop twisting. Park your bike up at the end of the day

This was on the last day of January!



and you're offered beer and bratwurst, and plenty of tales of the day's riding.

The company is hoping to expand into the UK market, and there was plenty of English spoken through the day. Packages can be built to suit, but trips start from two days on

the road for €1,449 for everything bar your flight. The money no object event is two days on track, two on the road and two endure days. That comes in at a not unreasonable (from) €3,349. For more details, head to www.bmw-motorrad-test-camp.com

WIN

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GET OUT, SEE STUFF: PRESCOTT BIKE FESTIVAL – 10TH APRIL

This now regular annual event, really gets the season started. As it's held at the venue of a hill climb (near Cheltenham), there is a sporting bent to the event, and bikes take to the hill spiritedly. But aside from that there's stacks of bikes to see, stars to mingle with and bits to buy, meaning you get a great day out for your money – speaking of which, the event is all run for the Severn Freewheelers charity. KTM is there in force this year, offering test rides, so don't forget your licence! For more info, point your laptop at www.prescottbikefestival.co.uk



Safe as houses...



Get up that hill!



Not Monaco, but not far away...

GREAT LAUNCH ROAD: MONACO

Kawasaki went wild with the budget and took us to Monaco to launch the Z800. The principality is a mecca for the rich and famous, put plenty of non-rich and non-famous petrol heads like to venture there to sample the delights of the famous Grand Prix track. But if that's your sole reason for a visit, prepare to be disappointed. The town is a working one, albeit selling Rolexes and Prada, and the F1 roadshow has privileged access. Rolling into town declaring 'do you know who I am' won't cut it. So once you've done your sightseeing, head for the hills. The route Kawasaki had us on was wriggly enough, but still populated, meaning that you don't want to stray too far above the speed limit in the most heavily policed country in the world. We then headed towards Frejus, back in France, and to the infamous DN7 road, which is well



F1 anyone?

worth checking out if great corners, smooth Tarmac and no traffic is your thing. But we'd recommend heading north out of Monaco towards Sospel. If you try the D2566 and the D2204 you'll be on the roads that are used in the Monte Carlo rally - except now there will be no snow on them. Gnarly and packed with turns, there are some surfaces that could do with a bit of work, but on the right bike (like a Z800) they're an absolute hoot.

POSTCARD FROM: NORWAY

I've done a lot of travelling on two wheels, but tended to head south rather than north. That all changed this year when curiosity got the better of me and I went to Norway for my week on my ZZR1400 (away from the wife and kids). I booked the ferry and then thought that I was being a bit rash, hearing stories about how expensive it was and how zealous the police are about speeding, but either I got it lucky (about the police, at least, it's pricey!) or it's all a big myth.

I'll not lie, it's a long way to get there. Getting there is a pain, involving a ferry to Holland, then into Germany, then a ferry to Denmark and finally a hop over to Norway at Stavenger. It took me two days of hard riding and hard ferrying to just get to the country in the first place.

I had two 'must dos'. The first was the Atlantic Road than crosses various islands - you'll have seen it in a car advert no doubt. And something had been shot there the week before, the locals were saying, so keep your fingers crossed that it's open. It is a stunning road, but there's not enough of it. Because it's a tourist trap, and the reputation of the police, you can't really gun it, but I was glad I went because the engineering is a triumph. Mind you, it's a day from the port at



Mind the gap

Stavenger, although a thoroughly pleasant one. On the way up I stuck on the E39.

The other must do was trying the roads around the fjords, particularly around Lysebotn. I loved the ride back down on the E13, now I was in more relaxed mode, and some of the views there are amazing. Once you get to the fjords, some of the hairpin roads are better than the ones in the Alps. A procession of camper vans was the one downside, but if you pick your moment you can have some fun.

I knew petrol was going to be expensive, but it really is eye wateringly dear. Food and accommodation are also as steep as the roads, but I'm still paying off my fuel bills now. But I don't resent it, as the bits of Norway I saw were a real eye opener. A direct ferry would save a lot of hassle, and save me from buying new tyres in Germany!

Steven Tait, Ipswich

TEA TEA: BRITAIN'S BEST BIKE MEETS SQUIRES CAFÉ, SHERBURN-IN-ELMET

Squires is an institution in North Yorkshire, and has been serving bikers for over 50 years. Home to many clubs, runs and meets, both formal and informal, there's plenty of metal to gawp at and people to chat to - and there's even a camp site should you wish to stay for a little longer. On top of that, there's an accessories shop should your bike need a pit stop as well as you. Busy on any evening or weekend that's sunny, it's a great place to stop in an area that never gets boring to ride.



Fancy a brew, squire?



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Tracks

TOP FIVE UK TRACKDAYS

The sun's making an appearance, it's warming up (a bit), so there's no excuse not to shred rubber!

- ➡ 06/03/15 – No Limits host a 105dB day on the Donington Park GP circuit. No MotoGP this year, but lap faster than Rossi (Francis) there in 2015 for £119!
- ➡ 13/03/15 – Friday the 13th? Is that why it's so cheap? No Limits are running trackday at Mallory for under £80. There's also an ACU course for the aspiring racers out there.
- ➡ 16/03/15 – MSV Trackdays are one home turf at Brands Indy for £95. Bargain!
- ➡ 06/04/15 – New to track? MSV host a novice-only day at Snetterton 200 for £119.
- ➡ 07/04/15 – Focused Events are at Donington for a BMW track and training day. You'll get four session on the GP circuit AND some road riding lessons, hosted by Niall Mackenzie, Neil Hodgson and Steve Plater.



Young, dumb and full of, er, speed? Then go racing!

MORE KTM RC 390 CUP CARROTS FOR TEENAGERS...

Given that making a break in racing is getting harder and harder, KTM has just made it a whole lot easier – if you're aged 13-18, and not 18-30. The one-make RC 390 Cup, staged at selected rounds of British Superbikes this year, is bound to produce insanely close racing on identical machinery, and thanks to a new prize system looks to be even more of an incentive to bash bars in the quest for victory.

As well as Metzeler tyre prizes, KTM has wangled two spaces for the best riders to attend the 2016 Red Bull Rookies Cup selection event. Aprilia Superteens has been the proving ground for young racing talent in recent years (Casey Stoner, Cal Crutchlow, among others) but 2015 looks to set for change. Rootsy has ridden the 390 in race trim and was seriously impressed. Far from a GP prototype, there's still enough aptitude in the chassis to nurture future stars; fully adjustable WP suspension and a full Akra' exhaust are among the Power Parts bolt-on goodies. The RCs are a snip at £6,425 in race trim (plus your vodka and tonic) and entry will cost your dad/sponsor/drug dealer £2,100. There are also race packages with other series' sponsors to bring down the cost of competition, so head to www.ktm.com/gb to register your interest in spawning the next Marc Marquez!

PRODUCT OF THE MONTH – VENHILL Q/R COUPLINGS

You don't have to race in World Endurance to run quick-action brake couplings. Despite being around for an age, the simple idea has only just caught on with trackday riders and amateur racers.

These new Venhill couplings (designed to fit their Powerhose range) means you can separate the calipers without faffing around and getting tangled in brake lines. They're also handy for swift wheel changes and master cylinder swaps, without the need to bleed the braking system – which, let's face it, is a pain in the cock at the best of times.

The male 1/8th BSP thread on the coupling fits directly onto the swivel nuts on the brake/clutch lines. A bargain at £71.92 (retail including VAT).

Venhill - 01306 885111 - www.venhill.co.uk



RACEY DATES

- ➡ 8th March – Thundersport GB – Brands Indy
- ➡ 22nd March – Hottrax – Brands Indy
- ➡ 22nd March – World Superbikes – Thailand – Chang International
- ➡ 29th March – MotoGP – Qatar – Losail
- ➡ 29th March – Bemsee – Brands Indy
- ➡ 5th April – Hottrax – Cadwell Park
- ➡ 6th April – British Superbikes – Donington Park



Lights, cameras, action!



IS THE FUTURE OF SUSPENSION HAVING SEMIS?

Having sampled the all-new Öhlins electronic suspension on Ducati's 1299 Panigale at the press launch, Fast Bikes can predict this type of semi-active technology is the future for track-based antics – it's so god damned good. As good as the BMW's cushioning system is for the road, it lacks feel when you're on the limit at a circuit. The Öhlins kit is event based, rather than constantly taking data from bumps, jumps and rider input, so you get the best of both worlds – support under braking, softness for apex and mid-corner bump management, and support under acceleration.

Yamaha's new R1M has a very similar Öhlins kit to that of the 1299 Panigale, although the Yamaha uses a six-axis box of tricks to calculate dynamics, rather than the Ducati's three-axis IMU. Given the Yamaha will (more than likely) be easier to ride and the fact the 1299 isn't legal for racing, the Yamaha and its medley of electronics should clear-up in superstock racing in 2015.

Seeing the kit appear on two production models in 2015, are we going to see more bikes with this magical technology? Of course! But what about a bolt-on upgrade in the form of aftermarket suspension?

Martin Luginbergs from Öhlins; "We are working on it, but it needs an ECU to make it work. If we have a bolt-on system, how do we integrate it with the bike? It will be expensive as there are many parts, and you'll need some kind of interface, like an iPhone or something."

DUNLOP D212 GP PRO

The trackday and racing season is upon us, so let's talk grip, lashings and lashings of it. This new-ish racing tyre from Dunlop was Fast Bikes' tyre of the year in 2013, bringing new levels of outright grip to road-legal, treaded rubber, although we (and Dunlop) wouldn't recommended them for highway use.

This is thoroughbred race rubber, so requires warmers to truly function. Using NTEC technology the D212s run stupidly low pressures at both ends, with a super-stiff carcass as support and a bigger contact patch. Without warmers, they take an age to gain heat and feel like you're riding on marbles.

Get them in the right environment, and nothing can beat the Dunlop's outright grip – particularly at full-lean – and stability. Only rider error or lack of ground clearance would cause crash on these puppies, although feedback and movement is slightly vague of you're used to Pirellis. I've never experienced mid-corner grip and confidence like the GP Pros offer, save for racing on a slick tyre.

The sharp profile takes a little getting used to but it's not a complaint, and massively boosts confidence in trail braking, pointing you to the apex. Like most treaded race tyres nowadays, the D212 was developed on the track and at pure road events before making production, and Michael Dunlop took his superstock Fireblade fitted with these tyres to a 131mph lap of the Isle of Man TT course.

With the switch to French production, availability is apparently sporadic and the D212s are expensive, but you can't put a price on sensational grip. 10/10.



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Cutting through the crap...

ROOTSY KAWASAKI ZX-6R 636

TIME ON TEST:
12 MONTHS

07432 ODOMETER
MILES

BHP: NA
GAIN:

NEXT AIM:
FUN TIMES?

THIS MONTH I HAVE MOSTLY BEEN... "Hoped it wouldn't turn into rust..."

You know it's cold when after you've washed the bike you go to spray some Scottolier F365 on and you find out that the contents of the bottle are frozen. Yup, it's been a tough month cutting through the crap...

Now that the new office is up and running, my days spent commuting from the bedroom to the dining room are over. I've had to find my heated kit, get the right chargers, plug myself in and hope for the best. My run to and from Bath used to be a case of settling myself onto the motorway, enjoying all the safety that the trunk road offers, but now there's no getting away from riding on back roads in the dark, not knowing if they've been treated or not and scrubbing the grime from my headlights to enable me to see.

Yes, this is not motorcycling's finest month – unless you happen to be in the south of Spain on the launch of the BMW F 800 R like I happily found myself mid-issue. But to get me there required employing the Kawasaki for the airport run. I love taking the bike to the airport, leaving me with more time to faff about what kit to take and where I'm going to stuff my sunglasses. But the weather decided to laugh in my face, with a downpour drenching me on the way to Heathrow.

In itself, this wasn't much of a problem. It rains, you get wet, then you dry out. The issue was that the bike got absolutely caked in spray, meaning that what was once a near pristine green machine was now a horrible grey mess. It pained me to leave it to the salt's devices for the next two days, but that was my only choice short of booking it in for a £90 valet along with the Range Rovers and Aston's getting washed in T5's short term car park. I comforted myself in my previous efforts to thaw the F365 and apply it to the bike, as well as hoping that the pre-Christmas ACF-50 daubing was still being effective.

It didn't look great on my return, but having got home and fired up the hose I found that Kawasaki has gone to town on most of its bolts and bits. As abuse goes, the environment it had just spent the last few days in were about as tough as it got, way harder than any trackday for the machine, but a mild clean with the application of half a tub of elbow grease got it back to its former glory. The chain is probably, ahem, the weak link, so I've lavished it with lots of lube. I had preconceived ideas about Kawasakis, born in part from previous machines, but the ZX-6R is shrugging it all off. The




Price from new: £8,999

Insurance group: 15

Modifications	Price
GB Racing protection bundle	£212.56
GB Racing bullet sliders	£66.60
HM quickshifter	£416.75
Scorpion Serper exhaust	£349.00
Renthal Intellilevers	£181.44
R&G Racing exhaust holder	£68.49
R&G Racing tail tidy	£66.99
Metzeler Sportec M7 RRs	£240.00

battery too is performing well, and I've had batteries on other bikes fail well before now.

We stuck a post up on Facebook about riding in the winter, with plenty of you saying that you didn't want the salt to eat into your pride and joy. We wouldn't want that, either, but that doesn't have to be the case, as the ZX-6R is currently proving. 



The MT is coping well with winter...

CHARLIE YAMAHA MT-09

TIME ON TEST:
11 MONTHS (FBK289)

06024 ODOMETER
MILES

BHP: 109
GAIN: 5

NEXT AIM:
SERVICE

THIS MONTH I HAVE MOSTLY BEEN... "Biting the Bullet."



I feel like I've been agonising over the decision to remap the MT for ages. I was looking at it pre-Bruce taking the bike to foreign climes and once returned, well, I had to agonise all over again. Hindsight that's been rated as 20/20 in my case, proves that I should not have been so bothered; the mild operation has been well worthwhile.

I returned to Phoenix Yamaha in Trowbridge for the mapping and Wayne got to work hooking the laptop up to the ECU. On starting the program you are asked three times if you're sure as once you start her running – there's no way back. It was a 15 minute job and the

benefits were apparent from the off. The difference is at the low end. The snatchy throttle has gone, but is no less exciting or responsive. It's just smoother, not tamer. This allows for an aggression with the throttle without the short jerky bursts that can genuinely throw you.

Apparently, some people have been told they would lose power with the new mapping. Well that's certainly not the case for this

machine. Having strapped her up to James's dyno at JHS it actually showed a 2bhp gain, though this can be explained via the atmospheric differences from the last run. What we got, again at the low end, was a much smoother curve than pre-map. Job done, as far as I am concerned.

What was interesting, however, was the limiter in fifth and sixth gears. Testing on a dyno in fourth, like you do, we hadn't noticed before that the ECU will not allow the MT to go full chat in the top two gears; it limits the bike to 10k and 9k revs respectively. This could be linked to the ABS. So after removing the rear sensor then, yes, we could redline in the higher gears, but the ECU had kicked in giving a reduced power of a mere 71 bhp. We cannot be sure if this is just the MT's electronics and ABS fiddling with things, so need to get a standard one hooked up and ragged to compare. Any offers?

So with all of this going on I have hardly touched on the other mods made. Hardly a bike goes through my hands without a bit of Rizoma loving and the MT is no exception. I have had the lever guard on for some time but have now added a screen that gives ample buffering against the wind, a petrol cap and a set of mirrors whose aesthetic quality far outweighs practicalities. However, the antiglare shaded mirrors don't provide adequate rear views and the petrol cap doesn't lock, in fact you open it with a specially designed key ring that is again beautifully machined – or with a pair of needle nosed pliers if you



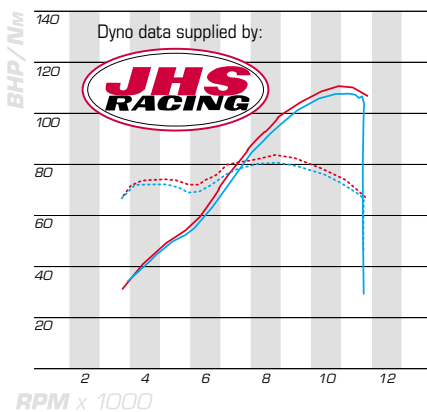
Price from new: £6,949
Insurance group: 14

Modifications	Price
Akrapovic full system	£967.99
Gilles clutch lever	£107.99
Gilles brake lever	£107.99
Gilles rearsets	£489.49
LED flashers (front)	£48.49
LED flashers (rear)	£48.49
Licence plate holder	£98.99
Engine protectors	£170.99
Seat cover	£70.99
Andreani fork cartridges	£372.00
Öhlins YA 335 Shock	£499.91
Rizoma Proguard system	£73.03
Rizoma gas cap	£139.42
Rizoma linea mirrors (pair)	£131.31
Rizoma mirror adapters	£14.02
Headlight fairing (aluminium)	£213.19
RUNNING TOTAL	£3,554.29

lose the bloody ring. Either way, and criticism aside, it's fabulous jewellery, beautifully crafted and the quality you would expect from the price tag.

Last on are the Bridgestone T30s, the Japanese firm's sports touring tyre with a tread that boasts longevity and a grip that's manfully coping with the cold, dank, smeary, mud streaked, diesel strewn, god awful roads I have ridden since fitting them. So far, so good then.

POWER AND TORQUE



POWER — POST MAP
TORQUE - - - - - PRE MAP

NEXT MONTH

THE PERFECT CELEBRATION OF THE 300TH ISSUE OF
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KAWASAKI H2 AND H2R LAUNCH

28 more sleeps to go...

On Sale: 31/03/2015

PETER SUZUKI V-STROM 1000

TIME ON TEST:
1 MONTH (FBK299)

01806 ODOMETER
MILES

BHP: NA
GAIN: NA

NEXT AIM:
LEARN HER!

THIS MONTH I HAVE MOSTLY BEEN... "Trying to feel my fingers again..."

So this month I finally managed to sort a collection date for the V-Strom, and I set off from Bristol in temperatures well below zero. I couldn't feel my fingers by the time I reached Swindon and so necessitated a pit stop for coffee. I pried my icy digits off the Hayabusa's bars and spent the next five minutes with my hands on the exhausts (I got a lot of dodgy looks!), trying to get some feeling back into them. The thought of a comfy V-Strom with heated grips for the return journey spurred me on, but the cold really did demand stops every 20 minutes or so in my summer gloves. Trust me to pick the coldest day of winter thus far! The result of this was that my journey to Suzuki GB took much longer than normal...

After arriving, I promise you, I nearly started to cry when I discovered the V-Strom I'd be receiving didn't have heated grips. I psyched myself up and tried to convince myself that the knuckle guards fitted would make a difference for my ride back. In these temperatures, though, they made bugger all difference! Luckily, the distraction of a shiny new bike was enough to prevent me concentrating on the glacial torture, and I managed to make it back without any major incidents. So what are my first thoughts?

Well, I've been immediately struck by how much better the brakes are on this model than the previous two Suzuki machines I've been riding. I'm not joking; they're ace, with the perfect amount of initial bite that instills confidence yet, thanks to the ABS, won't ever leave you worried about an accidental lock-up. Super impressed!

It's an adventure bike, so feels very tall in comparison to anything sportier, but this model can still really move when asked. The 19-inch front wheel prevents razor sharp handling, obviously, but I like the way it flows from corner to corner. It's a heavy bike, but is so beautifully balanced that you'd never notice, and the stability is excellent, too. I stated that I thought the Hayabusa would benefit from traction control and I still stand by that. You don't need it during the summer, but the extra safety factor it gives the V-Strom really makes it feel like a bike you can use year round. Count me in as converted!

The dash is brilliantly clear and has the appearance of a quality item. It has a multitude of functions, displaying everything from battery voltage to mpg and mileage range remaining. Unfortunately, the adjustable screen is a bit useless for me. Even on its highest



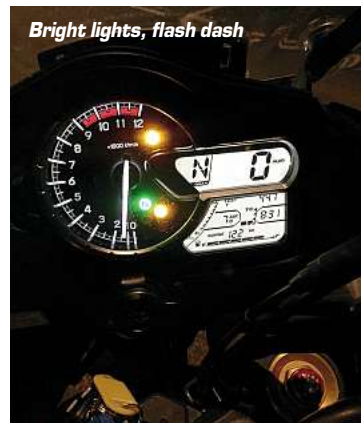
Price from new: £9,999
Insurance group: 14

setting it's too low, which results in a lot of buffeting. However, there is an aftermarket item available through Suzuki, so this could be easily remedied if it caused you too much bother and the bike is well-priced enough that adding a taller screen as a first accessory won't hurt at all.

The bike isn't slow, but the engine feels a bit breathless at first, although I think that can be attributed to having just handed the keys back to a 190mph 'Busa rather than poor performance on the Strom's behalf! It generates max torque at 4,000rpm and this makes it perfect for everyday riding as it is where you spend the majority of your time. In other words, it's extremely usable. So, first impressions are in and they're very good. I can really see me and this bike getting on quite well! **FB**



Wot no heated grips?



Bright lights, flash dash



Taken at midday in Feb...



The Monster rocks!

DAN DUCATI MONSTER 821

TIME ON TEST:
1 MONTH (FBK299)

04241 ODOMETER
MILES

BHP: NA
GAIN: NA

NEXT AIM:
WHEELIES?

THIS MONTH I HAVE MOSTLY BEEN... "Missing a quick shifter"



So the day has come and the 899 Panigale is returning home. I had planned to give it a good send-off riding it back on the now well trodden path I've been using to go back and forth to Silverstone. This takes in A and B roads, a bit of town work and is generally a really good thrash and can tell me a lot about a bike. That was until I saw the weather forecast for the day I was due to take it back – snow. Bugger!

Even more upsettingly, I didn't even get a final ride on it because it snowed on the Monday I had put to one side and taken off work. So in the back of the van it went, and the missus decided to come up for the ride, and have a look around Ducati UK HQ. I'm like a child in a sweet shop every time I go up there, as there are the coolest bikes all lovingly lined up, beautiful and spotless.

On this occasion I was lucky enough to see the new Scrambler and the 1299 Panigale. The 1299 appears very cool. BJ told me it was amazing on the recent launch, and the few changes they have made really add to the look of the bike. I think the Scrambler seems really trick too, especially in red, and I couldn't get over how small it was. I does look like it will be a lot of fun. Wheelies, anyone? I also saw the new Multistrada that features a lot of new technology on it this time around, and the seat height is lower (even I could touch the floor and I'm a short arse!). It looks really good in the new colours as well.

Offloading the 899 was a heart-breaking experience and one I had hoped would never come. I can't get over how much I have fallen for this bike. I thought when I borrowed the 1199 I wouldn't want the 899 back. I thought it would feel underpowered and frustrating. But 10 minutes after swinging my leg back over it again and heading down towards Chipping Norton, at a rapid rate of knots, I had forgotten all about the 1199 and had the biggest smile back on my face. That first bend was what really did it. It may be down on power compared to the



Price from new: £8,995
Insurance group: xx

DUCATI
INSURANCE

1199, but you can carry that speed so easily though a corner that on the road you are actually quicker on the 899 than the bigger Panigale.

It really is such an awesome machine, I'm totally sold, so anyone who's considering buying an 11 or 1299 should take one of these out first, stick it in race mode and take it for a good long ride before making your decision. So, is that the last I'll see of ZZN, or an 899 Panigale? I hope not and I have had some encouraging news from the guys at Moorspeed regarding my bike being sold, fingers crossed.

So what's next? Well a Monster 821 will be my ride for the next couple of months. This is my first time with a naked bike and it will be interesting to see how I get on with it. First thing I can report is it sounds amazing on the overrun, popping and banging its little heart out. Already I'm liking it rather a lot, and will be able to tell you guys much more about it in the next issue. However, it doesn't have a quickshifter which is annoying and a little frustrating after using the epic one on the 899 for so long. I know, I know, spoiled! **FB**



The little Panigale has made a big impression...



IAN YAMAHA R6

TIME ON TEST: 8
6 MONTHS (FBK294)

01601 ODOMETER
MILES

BHP: NA
GAIN: NA

NEXT AIM:
NEW BIKE?

THIS MONTH I HAVE MOSTLY BEEN... "Avoiding the phone."

Well, the news is that I had the dreaded call from Yamaha this week, asking me to bring back the R6. I almost put the phone down on them, but then I remembered it was their bike and they have been bloody good to me! They were due to replace it with an MT-07 but they're selling so well they don't have a spare one at the moment. That's all you need to know about that machine – get 'em while they're hot!

So what have I learned about the Yam' in the last few months? More than anything it's surprised me. It's so far away from being a bike suited to urban riding it's ridiculous, apparently. It should be too small for me, being well over six-foot and the engine shouldn't have enough ponies to keep me interested. It's not even a case of the whole being greater than the sum of the parts that make you forget about these things though, because they're simply not true.

That's because it works brilliantly, every time. Does it have that special 'every ride feels like an event' thing? No, not quite, but after all there are very few bikes that do. But it does have that stripped down, race bred and, dare I say it, hooligan appeal, coursing through its metaphorical mechanical veins.

I've seen my fair share of hoody, no gloves and trainers rude boys riding

around on them. But the R6 is not about that, not one bit. It's a seriously quick bike let's not forget. Wear what you want when you ride, but the Yamaha should be taken more seriously because of its inherent arsenal. A friend of mine races quarter-mile sprints and tells me a standard R6 with just a Power Commander and pipe is hitting around 11-second runs at his events. After spending time on the bike, I believe him. I love pinning the thing, the high revving engine is extremely intoxicating and slapping it down around big roundabouts and flicking left onto the exit feels predictable, balanced and then the big rush comes on again as it screams up to 17,000rpm. And then there's the next gear. I'm hooked on that, a fully paid up addict.

Where is your money going in the R6? In my opinion it's on the balanced package. Nothing on its own stands out above all else. Yes, the engine is epic, but doesn't blitz the competition out of the water. It's also the build quality, finish, suspension, brakes and chassis that give you a great road bike.

The one thing I'd change about this test would be the months of the year we've lived together. I'd have liked to have taken the R6 on track, and ideally away for a week abroad. Who wants to do that in January? The flipside is that



Price from new: £9,299
Insurance group: 15

I've been out on it almost every day in all conditions, had some great weekend ride outs on it and feel like I know the bike intimately. Pillion space for the record is definitely, erm, interesting. If you're planning on keeping your partner I wouldn't recommend taking them on the back down to the Millau Viaduct! So then, would I buy one? Yes I would, but admittedly for the younger me. I'm a lazy rider these days, I want everything on tap and the R6 is simply too demanding sometimes, plus if I live the way it wants to, screaming everywhere, I'll end up getting in trouble! Right, I'm waiting for Yamaha to give me a call with some good news about, fingers crossed, another bike. Until then safe riding, over and out for now and sayonara R6 you'll be missed. **EB**



Runs like it's on tracks...

Pit Pass

ULTIMATE ACCESS TO THE WORLD'S RACE PADDOCKS, RACERS & TEAMS



TESTING OUR PATIENCE?

Perhaps we shouldn't be surprised that at the first big test of the 2015 MotoGP season current champion Marc Marquez smoked everybody. He even dipped into the 1m58s club at Sepang, the first to ever do so. It seems there's little he can ever do without setting some kind of record along with it. Much of the credit is, of course, going to Marquez, but Honda has hardly had a winter of thumb twiddling and has produced another stellar RCV for Marquez to exploit... And maybe it's this rampant success at everything that appears to drive so many people against him. We'll be honest, from what we've gathered it's mostly fans of Valentino Rossi who seem to have the biggest issue with Marquez and his dominance. Yes it's always sad to see a legend superseded, especially if they're still about when the new generation is kicking their arse, but let's not forget that Rossi did much the same thing when he rose to prominence. It's hard to swallow when your idol can't do it week in and

out any more it's true, but hey, that's life.

One thing we can never fathom though, is that the 'boring' tag is levelled at Marquez time and again. OK, someone winning every single weekend can get a bit dreary, and the usual procession behind him can induce the odd yawn, but can you honestly admit to yourself that watching Marquez isn't stunning at any point? Riding by himself, he tends to look like he's going to crash at every corner. Much like Casey Stoner did, in fact, but with much more drama than the shy Aussie could muster when it was time to get back on the gas. And Casey very rarely had the rear wheel off the deck as his knee was hitting the asphalt.

In a race, whenever someone goes past Marc he bursts into action and we get the scraps we've been missing in MotoGP for so long. Or he's driving towards the front from a crap start, making audacious moves, quite often taking more than one rider per lap on his way to the lead. None of that is boring, we'd venture.

So the moans against him amount to little more than sour grapes at the moment, although we'll concede if nobody can match him it will inevitably start to grate after a few more years of it. Not that it's Marc's fault if that ends up being the case. The guy will hardly slow down, will he?

And we're yet to see him even get pushed really hard. The only man who did all of last year was Jorge Lorenzo at Mugello, and even then we believe Marquez had things covered. His even bigger issue could be in 2016, with the switch to Michelin tyres. His unique style of corner entry, one of his biggest advantages, may not be possible on the French rubber. So he'll be forced to adapt to remain the top dog. For 2015 though, and short of any unforeseen injury or bad luck, you'd have to say the odds remain firmly on him nailing a hat trick of titles. We can only pray the others – and their manufacturers – will actually make it difficult for him this year... **EB**



PIC: HRC

Pit Pass

ULTIMATE ACCESS TO THE WORLD'S RACE PADDOCKS, RACERS & TEAMS

BSB – WIZARDS OF OZ


Go you good things



BSB Yamaha R1 Revealed

The bikes everyone is desperate to see in action in BSB have finally been revealed, the Shaun Muir Racing Milwaukee Yamaha R1 superbikes to be piloted by Josh Brookes and Broc Parkes. It's safe to say they look stunning in their full race livery. If championship contenders ran on looks alone, they're already well within a shout. More interesting is how Yamaha is approaching easing the R1 into competition, in that they're waiting on entering the world series until 2016, and letting national championships be the test bed for development. Yamaha has already stated they'll be back in WSB, and we've heard some ace

rumours that it'll be Shaun Muir's squad who make the move there. Whether or not they'll be the official team, or just another supported team there alongside another, remains to be seen. Challenging on the world stage is hard – just ask Paul Bird and Mark Griffiths.

Exactly who will race the R1 in WSB is also a mystery, and that's a subject that will have the tongues wagging for many months. We'd expect at least one MotoGP incumbent to end up racing one, with a young gun on the second bike. Brookes and Park would be in the running, but only if they could secure Yamaha a BSB title trophy at the first time of asking. 

RACING LINES

■ **Gino Rea to WSS:** After a couple of years propping up the wrong half of the grid in Moto2, Gino has finally seen sense and returns to world supersport, the scene of some decent rides. He'll race for the PTR CIA Landlords Insurance team. Go get 'em, Gino!

■ **Zarco Tops Test:** Johaan Zarco was flying in the recent Moto2 test at Valencia, although Brit Sam Lowes wasn't too far behind. Current Moto3 champion Alex Marquez, however, was well off the pace. We're sure that won't last long...

■ **Melandri Begs To Leave:** As we go to press, we hear that Marco Melandri has begged Aprilia to go back to WSB, after being dead last on every day during the GP test at Sepang. He wants to swap with current WSB rider Jordi Torres who, thus far, is having none of it.

■ **Russia Out:** Somewhat predictably, the Russian round of WSB has been cancelled for 2015. Disappointingly, it won't be replaced, which is, quite frankly, rather annoying as it means more big gaps in the WSB schedule when it clearly deserves at least a 15-round calendar. So it'll be 13 rounds this year, unlucky for some. Fingers are crossed for a few more in 2016.

■ **Michelin Crash-Fest:** At Sepang Michelin tested its new GP tyres, the result being a stack of front end offs. Current racers are due to roll on these hoops for a day at the next test, which to us sounds like madness. Who wants a big crash, or even risk an off, just before the season starts? Nobody. MotoGP's tyre change will make for interesting viewing, we're sure.

MOLE: BACK TO BUSINESS...

Testing Times



A welcome return...

■ I took a month off in the last issue, I hope you don't mind, as quite frankly there was so little going on I actually had to watch some other sports to keep myself entertained. That and make stuff up in my head. Both were about as equally entertaining as the other, for about five

minutes, then boredom set in again. There wasn't even any testing to go and attend, January was pretty much dead. I know we complain when there's too much on, and we have to jump on plane after plane, going through one set of security gates after another, and another. But the truth is that I wouldn't change it for the world, at least not yet, and definitely not until I'm completely grey and totally fed up with it all.

So it was with great joy that I managed to take in not only a day at a WSB test, but also some time at Sepang, which fitted in with some other local business therefore justifying the expense of the long flight!

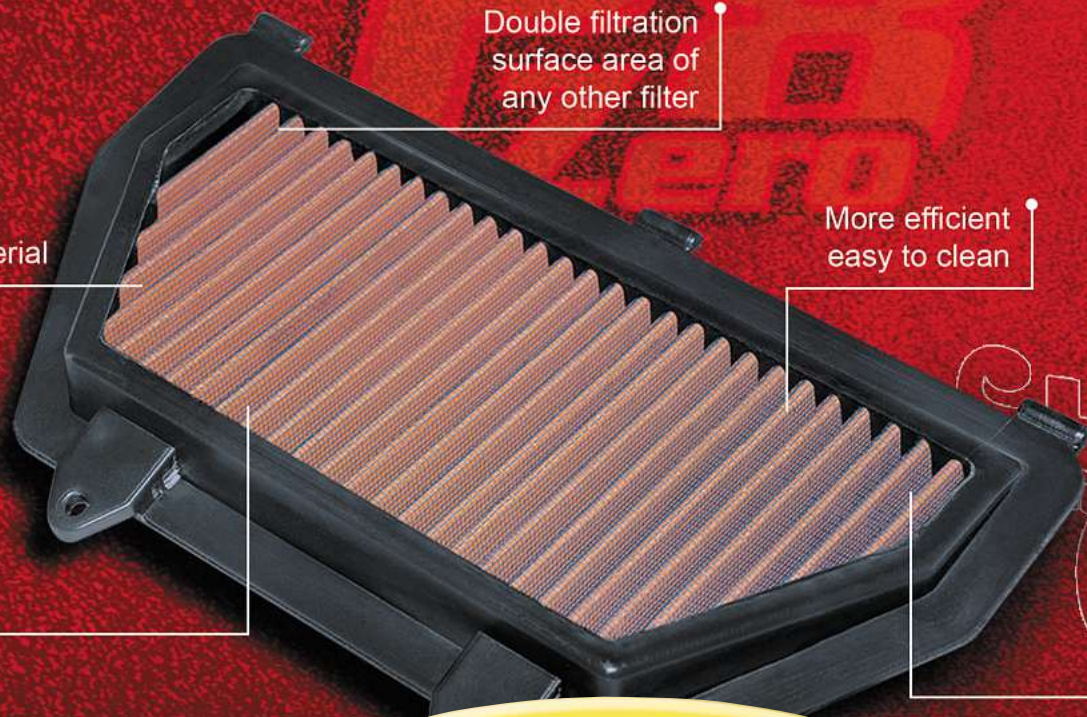
It won't take a genius to figure out that Marquez is going to be the man yet again, already there's a descending pall of inevitability falling across the MotoGP paddock regarding who may take the title. Of course, racing often throws up surprises, so here's hoping things remain interesting. What's become clear after the opening salvos of 2015, however, is that things don't seem to have changed much at all. Honda's improved customer RCV sees said customers still in roughly the same places as last season. The satellite bikes are also inhabiting exactly the same spots, too.

The wildcards have been Suzuki, with Aleix Espargaro especially impressive I'd say. They appear to have sorted their reliability issues as well, and I'll be more than happy to see him get in amongst the regulars who will likely trade places between themselves all season, behind the usual top four of the factory Honda and Yamaha squads. The big surprise for me was how quick the Ducati boys were, Andrea Dovizioso was very fast. And this was essentially on the old bike; we are yet to see the brand new machine even turn a wheel. If it's better than the current bike, Ducati could be back with a bang meaning Dovi and Andrea Iannone could be major spoilers this year. I hope they chuck the cat amongst the pigeons come the first race at Qatar.

Prior to that though there will be a couple of WSB events. The first at the always awesome Phillip Island, and then a brand new track in Thailand. New circuits often spice things up, and WSB is already looking quite the curry-pot this season. Pick a winner from the grid – not easy is it? The new rules, and those in new seats, means the form guide went right out of the window. So I'm super excited to see what happens there, yet also a little sad the rumours that Dorna were to possibly sell WSB, have diminished. I imagine their worst nightmare is for someone to get hold of that series and have a real crack at it, therefore returning it to a genuine rivalry once again. As relationships with all-important manufacturers are seemingly forever on the brink in the GP paddock, they wouldn't want anyone becoming too attractive a proposition, so remaining in control makes some sense. Shame, I've always thought GP would actually be better off without the major factories as it happens, but that's a story for another month...

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Rea has been drawn
to the green side...





REA OF LIGHT

Jonathan Rea has spent his entire racing life trying to win for Honda. But for 2015 he's seeing if the grass is greener on the other side of the garage...

Loyalty is something that's supposed to be rewarded. But back in the real world, and most pertinently any arena of competitive sport, it can go from being absolutely everything to utterly meaningless within a heartbeat. There are times when no matter how hard you've banged your head against a brick wall you need to take a rest, take stock and take action.

From an outsider's perspective, Jonathan Rea has been headbutting the side of the Honda garage for many years now. Despite him keeping the ageing Fireblade near the front and on TV (helped by incredible efforts from the Ten Kate team), no real aid from the Big H ever really came. And that was a crying shame, as every year he would somehow drag the bike onto the top step of the podium at least a few times each season. A title win was forever out of reach, always that morsel of absent official backing away from becoming a reality. And it wasn't for lack of trying, just go back through the records and see which of Johnny's team-mates ever did anything on the Honda. Had a look? Not much, right?


It seemed that Honda was forever poised to hand him a ride in MotoGP, as a thanks for years of service and race wins in WSB. He got that chance deputising for Casey Stoner for two rounds in 2012 on the Repsol Honda, impressed everyone, and then watched as other far less successful racers were handed GP

berths in front of him. Something had to give...

So in the summer of 2014 he decided to ride for Kawasaki in 2015, and hopefully reignite his chances of becoming WSB world champion. A pity though, after spending so many years with Honda, right, Johnny?

"Yeah, I started with Honda in the British 125 series when Red Bull gave me an opportunity in a private team run out of Colin Appleyard's place. After that first year Red Bull merged with Honda UK to form a junior team, and from there it went on. It wasn't just a coincidence though, I had a lot of support from people inside Honda to create opportunities for me. After a few years in BSB, Ten Kate gave me the chance to race in world supersport, and I saw it as a progression from BSB. It was a slight gamble at the time, granted, as BSB was getting so strong. Before me, there was only really Chris Walker and Craig Jones in WSB. But when I set that trend to go there, quite a lot of my old rivals like Leon Camier, Cal Crutchlow, Tom Sykes and Leon Haslam made the jump. Up until then it was only really James Toseland who'd been there a while, kind of like a Lone Ranger, and before him Neil Hodgson. Moving to WSB wasn't really a stepping-stone many used at that time, as BSB was so popular. But I'm glad I made that step."

So was Honda really behind you?

"Yes they were, but it wasn't just a one way 

WORDS: BENJAMIN 'BJ' KUBAS CRONIN PICS: PATA HONDA, KEL EDGE

Rea has been
on fire in testing...

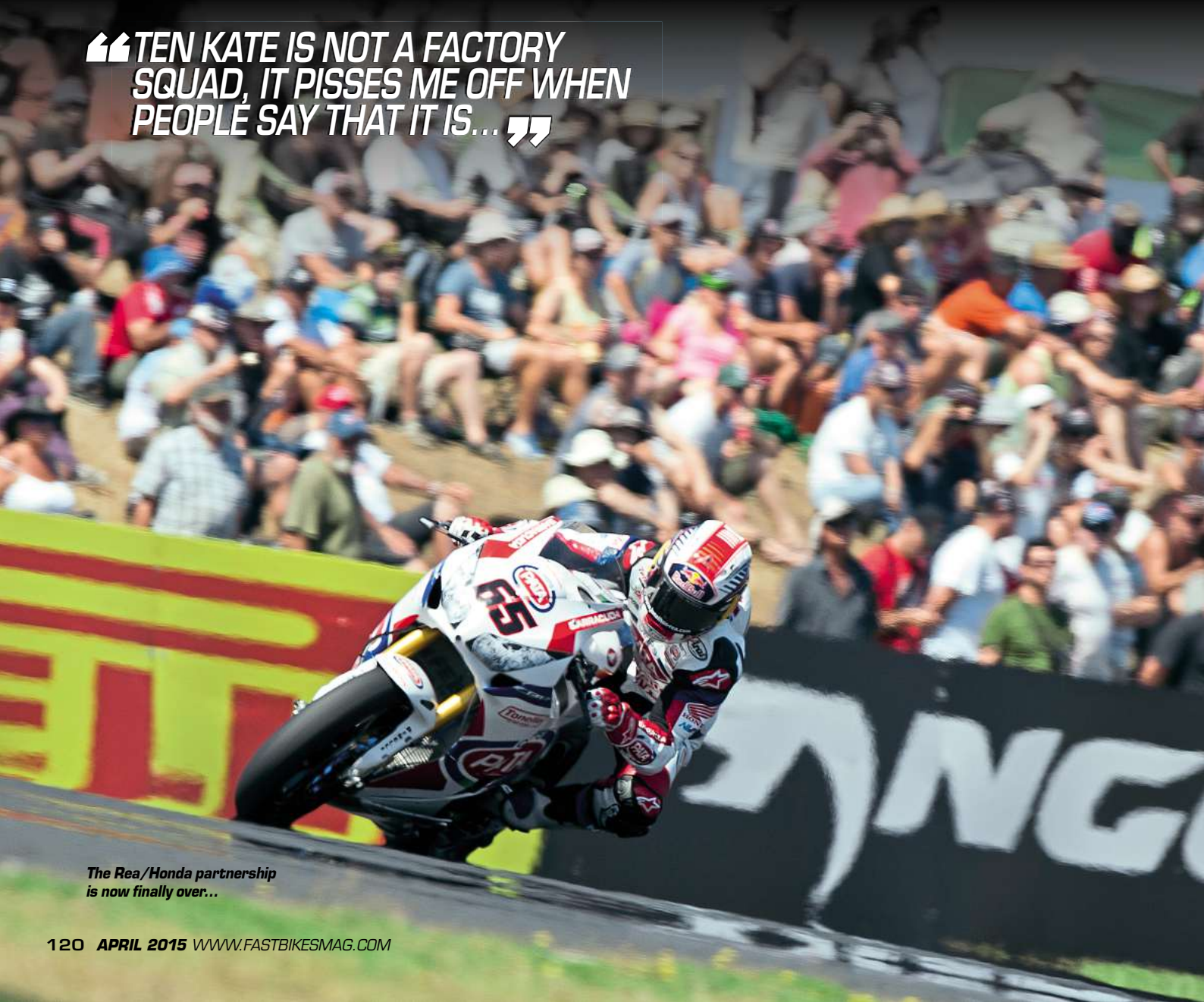


street. I was one of the only guys in recent years to do stuff for them, and from my first year on the Fireblade it kept competitive, so they'll always have a big place in my heart."

Our favourite outing of yours on the 'Blade, was that first ever race at Portimao in 2008, when you rode the Hannspree Superbike for the first time, remember that?

"Ha, yes, that place lends itself to riding like an idiot to be honest. That year was the first time we went, so we were all constantly finding the limits of the track. In race two, Troy Corser brake-checked me going into turn one, on the white-line, and I ran wide and it virtually ended my race. But I was pumped for the rest of it, qualifying on the front row and finishing fourth in my first race. A shame the second one went to shit because of running off. I'd been racing in supersport up until then, and my plan was always to win and move on to WSB. When it became mathematically impossible to win, my team-manager suggested I rode the superbike especially as my team-mate had already won the supersport title. Back then there was quite a lot of money to lose between finishing

“TEN KATE IS NOT A FACTORY SQUAD, IT PISSES ME OFF WHEN PEOPLE SAY THAT IT IS...”



The Rea/Honda partnership
is now finally over...

second and third in the supersport series, but I chose to ride the superbike. Luckily for me, Josh Brookes rode like a bit of an amateur so I got second in supersport anyway! I was properly made up as I had a great end of the year with a team one-two in supersport, and dipped my toe in WSB. My first day at school in 2009 didn't feel like a first day, as I'd got my jitters out of the way by racing at Portimao with guys like Noriyuki Haga. Plus I got to fight against Troy Bayliss in his last ever race, and was so pumped from that."

One thing that always winds us up is when Ten Kate get called a factory team. They're a bloody good team, but not factory, right?

"Honestly, that really pisses me off. Ten Kate is not a factory squad at all, I know what it's like to be a factory rider and they're anything but that. What they are is brilliant, and real hard workers. They are supported in monetary terms by Honda, but when journalists or whoever turn around and call it the factory Honda team, it discredits all the hard work they've done in the workshop, developing the bike themselves. Sometimes we got it wrong, more often than right, but we

still owe Ten Kate a lot as without them that bike wouldn't have won. Honda owe those guys big time. I owe a lot to Ten Kate, as basically the base bike remained the same from 2009, the chassis and engine. Every year we'd have updates and new things to try, but most of that was down to Ten Kate. Perhaps it's a little unfair to call them a fully private team too because they've such a big infrastructure and do things very professionally, what they do with the material they have to work with is incredible."

They're still the only 'privateers' to win the series in recent times, with James Toseland, and no help from Honda. We don't think he and Ten Kate get enough credit for that.

"I think you're right with that. Look, HRC kept an eye on us, of course they did. However, we got bent over on a number of occasions with things that should have happened, but never did. But that's just part of the learning process I'd say! I did have a great season in 2014, but I really couldn't have done any more. We lost our way a little bit in the mid-season and results could have been better, but we both have to take responsibility for that. Aside from that, I know the level of the bike, and to really mount a serious challenge I couldn't keep doing the same thing with the Honda. I wouldn't quite say banging my head against the wall, but I needed a change."

To Kawasaki and the ZX-10R, it would turn out. When did that happen?

"I made the decision in the summer break, I was talking to some MotoGP teams and some in WSB, but Kawasaki was the only really exciting deal on the table. The GP thing, the top guys fall into place quickly, and as you start working with the private or second-string teams, then it all becomes about budgets and I didn't want to wait to get a second-string machine. I wanted the best chance to win a title, or go to GP with a factory bike. As soon as that wasn't possible, the Kawasaki deal came through seamlessly. I have a good management team in the USA who were working on that, and Kawasaki has been in



Rea is now a Monster man...

contact for a few years."

As you've raced in GP, we can understand why you didn't want to make up the numbers. In WSB the rider can still make the difference.

"I've been there in MotoGP, yes, and I've been on the best bike, so I understand the level of everybody; riders, teams, bikes, the level is very high. To go there and do even a half decent job, you need the best or at least equal machinery to the best, and if you haven't got that you won't do a good job. It depends what your opinion of a good job is. Mine is to be top five every weekend, minimum, and without a top bike that will never happen in GP. Plus the people and personalities in the MotoGP paddock are quite different, I think that's the nicest way of saying it. The naivety of how they look at world superbike is quite disturbing really. The problem for me is when mid-pack GP riders come to WSB they always land the best rides, like Melandri, and so on. But if you're one of the best WSB riders you go to a private bike, like Crutchlow and Ben Spies to the satellite 》



Those first pass blues...



Yamaha team. More recently, Eugene Laverty and Loris Baz, I know the level of those two riders, who could both do a better job than the bike they're on will allow. It's all gone a little bit Formula One now, you kind of finish where your speed takes you, qualifying often mirrors the results. My main goal this year is to be competitive, and with Kawasaki I've got that now, and it gives me real motivation."

You first test wasn't quite as Kawasaki had hoped with the new rules, though Jerez was much better. Plus your riding style seems quite different from your team-mate, you seem to flow while Tom Sykes' style is a little bit...

"A bit stop-start? Yeah, maybe! We are a factory team, we may not have the same might as some manufacturers but we have a race department dedicated to us and constantly have new parts arriving. It's a little bit like a fish out of water for me, with this support, but also a good feeling. The bike is working really good for me, although even compared to the Honda the new specification engine is a tiny bit slower than last year. Unlike Tom I don't know the 2014 Kawasaki at all, so with my crew we are just working with what we have for this year, and step by step are making our way to feeling comfortable. In Jerez the bike wasn't bad, we just worked a lot on changing things, for the sake of changing things, to see what kind of feeling they give and to understand the feedback. The bike seems to work in quite a large window, and when we stuck a qualifier in for ultimate pace we were close, and on race pace we're already competitive. During the previous test at Aragon, Ducati had kind

“WE GOT BENT OVER ON A NUMBER OF OCCASIONS WITH THINGS THAT SHOULD HAVE HAPPENED BUT NEVER DID...”

of showed us the way around a little bit. We just need to get up and running, a couple of tests isn't a benchmark and Phillip Island is a bit of a strange one as championship trends go. So we'll see where we start and chip away at things when we get back to Europe."

Ducati is in a good position as the bike hasn't changed, you're right, nor lost as much power, but we expect that to level out.

"I'm not sure, we'll see, in Jerez I was the fastest through the speed traps on both days, although it may have been in the braking area. But at Aragon Davide Guigliano did come past me on the straight a couple of times! It's a big old bike, too, I've had to have a new seat made as it was far too roomy for me. I don't like to be in a cramped position, but I like to remain fairly stationary to keep a more stable centre of gravity on the bike. Now with the new seat, it's easier to ride fast for me, it's a very stable bike. We've been testing full screamer engines, and big-bang type engines and there are positive comments for both so we're playing a lot with the throttle. We're cutting some cylinders on the gas, but it's quite an art and also track-corner specific, as to how fast the injection butterflies have to catch up. Those data guys certainly earn their money! Superbikes electronics are at a high

level now, but it needs to be as you have some which come with no electronics, like the Honda, and some have full singing and dancing production machines. So you need it to open up the series to make everyone competitive. If it was just race what you sell, it'd be a one or two make championship and would put off some manufacturers. I enjoy the electronics side of things because it requires a lot of thinking, sitting down with my data guys and working out strategies and so on. Electronics don't ruin the show either, just look at the racing in WSB for proof of that," he concluded before getting on with his packing for the first round.

So then, we've got a happy Johnny on his new steed, confirming his commitment to superbikes and hopefully having a fresh shot at a title that's eluded him thus far. His biggest threat, in a series that's wide open, may well be his team-mate, already a champion on the green machine. Yet despite reservations about the how the new rules would affect the Kawasaki, we still think that in leaving the Honda nest he's made the best choice for potential glory. By the time you read this he'll have had his first competitive outing on the ZX-10R in Australia, so we'll see if he starts off in the right fashion. **EB**

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Clive Padgett

I'm often asked how we choose our riders, but for quite some time we haven't had to. I'm not being blasé, but John McGuinness has ridden for us for eight seasons, and he almost chooses himself, so we haven't really had to look for anyone.

Back in 2009, Ian Hutchinson joined the team, and he'd previously won a TT for Honda. He'd cycled down from Bingley one day, and he asked me, "Hey Clive, shall we go racing?" And that was that, that's how we signed Hutchy. We don't sit around having 20-hour meetings about the ins and outs. We had some great success with him, especially in 2010 with the five wins, as you know. Unfortunately he got injured, although Yamaha signed him up, which was great for him as he was able to get paid even while not racing much.

At that same time, Bruce Anstey had got the push from TAS Suzuki. Bruce got a friend of his called George, a lovely man, to call and say Bruce wanted to know if he could ride for me next year. A bit like 'my friend over there fancies you!'. I replied that if he wanted to, tell him to pick the phone up! These guys are all real people, and few have proper managers, and anyway you want to talk to the man who is going to be in the garage with you, get a real feel for him. I've known Bruce for many years, road racing is very insular so you all know one another to some degree.

If you're Mr Honda, you just want the fastest man in the world to ride for you. You don't have to sleep with him, have breakfast with him, spend time with him, and so on. Our team is different as we're a family squad, and it's a happy team too, though maybe ask my riders about that just to make sure! We do eat breakfast with my guys, we do spend time with them and they stay at our house. You need to understand each other's personalities to make sure there's some synergy and happiness. If you don't get on,



McLegend in Padgett's colours...

what's the point? You all have to pull the rope in the right direction or it won't work.

In times past we've had many amazing guys, like Leon Camier, for example. He was riding a 125 for us back then, had done Grand Prix, and I saw him have a go on a mate's four-stroke. Some people didn't fare well switching to a four from a two-stroke, though he did. I looked at his lap times and realised he could be quite good, and that we liked him and his family, so signed him up for BSB in 2004. The next year we won the championship with him, and he did three years with us.

Adrian Coates did three years with us, Jay Vincent did seven years with us, basically our riders tend to stay with us for a long time. We do look for talent and pedigree, but often they've been a customer at our shop so you've already got to know them. You think they're a nice lad, and realise they can ride a bike, so get on with them before you've even started to work together. The list of

riders we've supported over the years, starting with my uncle and my dad, is nearly endless. Yet so many just fell into place without actually having to look, we're lucky like that.

And we always keep good relations too, John Reynolds rang me last week and he last rode for us in 1994, he was after some bits for an RG500. What a fantastic person he is. He was initially a customer, too. A lot of our history and success wouldn't have happened without our shop. It funds our racing, and we also find riders and new friends through it, too. Come by and have a look and a cup of tea if you're passing, and never been in before, we've three different shops to choose from!



Hutchy the record breaker...

Two Siblings Racing

Drama, drama and more drama. As the start of the season closes in quickly, the fresh from the crate Team Fast Bikes is looking a tad worse for wear...

They say the first time is the most memorable. Lying on the X-ray bed, I realised my debut pitbike had been pretty exceptional. There's nothing cool about hopping around hospitals, but that was me last Friday, having been ran down by a 140cc Thumpstar. It was my own fault. A case of too much, too soon. Grimsby might not have all that much to shout about these days, but it's got a pretty sweet pitbike track. Lured on by the likes of Peter Hickman and a few other mates, I was quickly finding my feet on the super-slidey concrete circuit, but my confidence was writing cheques my talent couldn't cash. Trying my hardest to hunt down my brother Brod, the back end let go launching me airborne from my hobbit-sized steed.

Being just a few weeks away from the start of the No Limits Racing endurance season, I was dreading the results of my scans. I'd broken my right ankle twice before and I thought the left side was going to be playing catch-up. Thankfully, it turned out to be just a scratch. I'd tried my best to man-up, slotted on my coat and hopped the whole way back to Horncastle.

You hear of racers crashing pre-season and knacker up the year. That would have been a right 'mare. We've got our first test booked at the start of March and I can't wait to get out there with my brother and get to grips with the R6. The spec of the bike's coming along nicely. Gilles clip-ons and rearsets, a Yoshi' full race system and Öhlins suspension are all winging their way to us. It's an expensive shopping list, but having saved money against buying a new R6, there's a bit more budget for the best kit we can lay our hands on. We've even gone all out and got a few sets of Race Product's fairings to fit. They're great quality and sensibly priced.

What doesn't look so great is the state of the motor's internals. We've had this bike from new, and despite being



eight years old, it's had a relatively gentle life with regular refreshes and good quality oil always pumped through its veins. But that's not made it bulletproof. I headed over to Go Racing Developments and spent a whole day with Mark Saddler, holding back the tears as he gave his diagnosis on the mess that it is. A new set of valves on an R6 will set you back £1,800. We need just that, along with new pistons, rings and shells.

Our bike's got a Nova gearbox in it. It has had it for some years and it's mint. But a couple of dogs have begun to wear, probably owing to the abuse of a quickshifter, so we're firing it back over to Nova HQ to have a couple of gears replaced. Going back to a standard 'box might be cheaper, but it'd also be a step backwards in performance. I reckon we're looking at the best part of a grand to get the motor singing sweetly...

The biggest challenge now is getting everything we need in time to get out with No Limits for that first test at Cadwell Park on 7/8 March. Because Brod's never ridden a 600, he's going to need a bit of time to get his head around it. And I need to blow off the cobwebs from having sat on the sideline for so long. We're not worried about lap times, just good times. And with a bit of luck we'll have plenty of them throughout the year. The No Limits calendar's now up online – www.nolimitstrackdays.com – if you find yourself at any rounds, make sure to come and say hello.

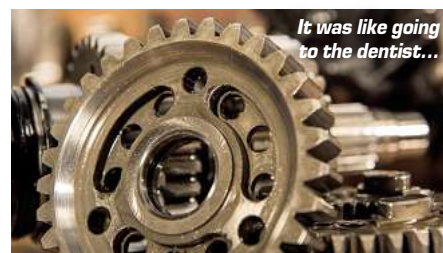
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Publishing Director: Dan Savage

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Phone our UK hotline on: 01507 529529

Overseas orderline: + 44 (0) 1507 529529 (From outside UK only)

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NEXT ISSUE ON SALE: 31.03.15

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Cover printed by William Gibbons & Sons on behalf of Mortons Media Group LTD
Printed in the UK by William Gibbons & Sons on behalf of Mortons Media Group LTD.
Distributed in the UK by Seymour Distribution Ltd, 2 East Poultry Avenue, London, EC1A 9PT-0207 4294000

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MEDIA GROUP LTD

Independent publisher since 1885

Media Centre, Mortons Way, Horncastle, Lincolnshire, LN9 6JR

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Chaz Davies

It's been a busy build up to the first race over the last month, with testing and even a team launch snuck into proceedings.

Testing went really well, pretty much a continuation of our work in 2014. We did a lot of electronics work, although the weather let us down a bit, which lately seems to be more often the case than not! But in Portimao we had a decent test, we were right up to speed immediately, and the same happened at Jerez too. We were steadily working through what we needed to, with a few new big and small parts and various options to consider.

There were no major issues, everything was quite steady and it's clear that between us and Kawasaki we were on the most competitive bikes out there, both consistently and over a single lap. That said, Leon Haslam was looking quite good on the new Aprilia too, but we're feeling good so far.

After that we went straight off to do the team presentation at the Aruba HQ in Italy, which was a rather impressive set-up and cool to see. They are an internet hosting and web based company, one of the biggest, if not the biggest, in Europe.

The guy in charge, Stefano, is really into the racing and it's all very cool as technically they now own our team! They wanted their own team originally, and were going to enter the series by buying bikes off Ducati. But in the process of those negotiations Ducati made them an offer if they were serious to commit to a joint effort, but if they wanted overall ownership of the team, that option was also open. They pretty much jumped at it!

We are still Feel Racing, so to speak, which is the structure that runs the team, but isn't the team itself, if you get my drift? Yet we're owned by Aruba, and the boss seems really fired up and super motivated. He's already been very successful at whatever else he's done, and it's really nice to get a sponsor outside of the industry, such a big tech' company like his, it's impressive and welcome.

Team t'internet



On a personal level, I've had my fair share of 'big' sponsors over the years who promise the world and come up with nothing, but Aruba are a huge company who are very serious about making this work with Ducati. This kind of thing really helps a race effort, I'm well chuffed to be involved with them.

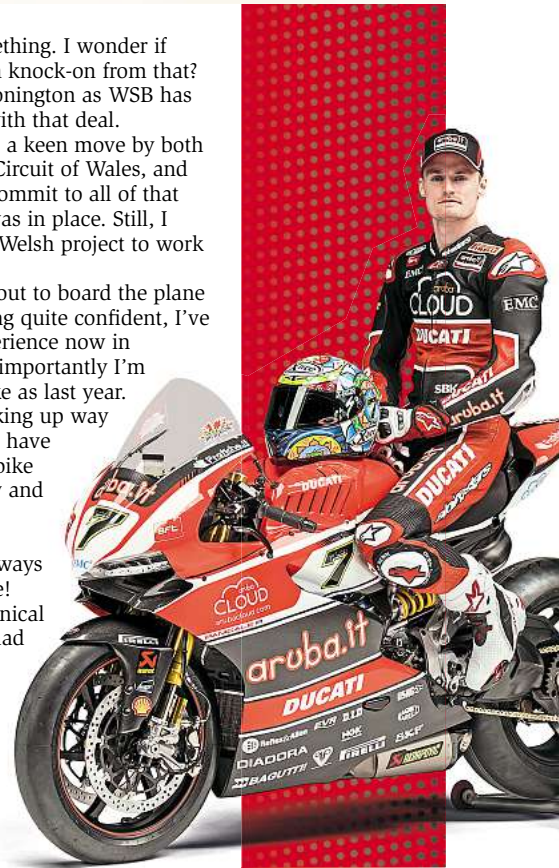
FB tells me Johnny Rea mentioned my team-mate Davide drove past him on the Kawasaki down the straight at Aragon. He probably did, but then they were a little behind the ball at that test. From what I can tell at Jerez there's now little difference.

People are saying the new rules are in our favour, but the way I see it everything has been stripped back to be more like the production bike – especially the core of the engine, with parts that anyone has access to. Is that, or is that not, what superbike racing is all about? Not sticking unobtainium type stuff to produce crazy power? We never had those special bits last year, but now it's been stripped back it's all levelled out, everyone's on an even keel.

Anyway, I've just heard about Donington pulling out of MotoGP, apparently to do with funding not coming from the Circuit of Wales

project, or something. I wonder if there could be a knock-on from that? We're fine at Donington as WSB has nothing to do with that deal. However, it was a keen move by both Dorna and the Circuit of Wales, and Donington, to commit to all of that when so little was in place. Still, I really want the Welsh project to work out, don't you?

Right, I'm about to board the plane to Oz. I'm feeling quite confident, I've got a lot of experience now in WSB and more importantly I'm on the same bike as last year. Things are stacking up way better than they have before, though bike racing isn't easy and anything can happen. But Australia has always been shit for me! How many technical failures have I had around that place, half a dozen? What you can be sure of, is that I'll be trying my hardest, so wish me luck – I'll need some!



Steve Parrish



Just back from the court hearing...

Who's your money on to win WSB this year? I'm putting mine down on Johnny Rea to spring a surprise in his first year on the Kawasaki. It's fair to say that production bike is getting on a bit now, although it's not as old as some of the others.

I'm also excited to see how young Michael VD Mark gets on, as the Honda should in theory be more competitive with the new rules, though bloody hell that Fireblade should be in classic racing these days! The Suzuki also went well at the early tests, though we won't have any idea of who will be the big hitters until we get back to Europe. Phillip Island isn't a marker, it's more a case of who has the biggest balls at that place, but it's nice to see a rule change properly shake things up a bit.

So then, the Donington, Silverstone and the Circuit of Wales MotoGP debacle. From the outside it all looks like a little bit of a clusterf@*k! The reason Silverstone didn't carry on is that Dorna wouldn't accept what they wanted to pay to host it. Then the Circuit of Wales jumped in, paid it, but now they're going to have to go back to Silverstone who will now get their deal in the end! I don't think anyone can blame Donington for pulling out. I don't think they had the money to resurface it and I'm sure that was one of the stipulations of running MotoGP there.

At least with Silverstone they just have to open the gates and away they go, the event will run really smoothly. I like both Donny and Silverstone for different reasons, but there's sod all wrong with Silverstone for TV racing, it always has great action as fast tracks tend to. I think everyone accepts it's not the best to spectate from, but the racing always makes up for it and it's a great venue. I'm quite happy with this happening, to be honest.

I did have a very long chat with Chris Herring after the announcement, who's one of the Circuit of Wales bosses, and he said it's all still going to plan so none of this means the Welsh track won't happen.

I'm quite excited now it's all sorted, though with all the tracks we have in the country to only have one (or two,

when Donny is up to spec) that meets international approval is disappointing. That's one reason that inspired the Circuit of Wales' inception.

Think of all our tracks, they were great in the 1970s, we were inundated with amazing circuits, but nowadays, and with the greatest of respect, they're a bit Mickey Mouse for modern bikes when you consider modern safety standards. Even Cadwell Park, which I love, is pushing it a bit, but it's so popular it will forever remain on the BSB calendar. I actually think Snetterton, with not too much investment, could be turned into a proper international spec' circuit. Just take back a bit more of the cabbage patch, improve facilities and bingo! That said, it's a lot bleaker than Silverstone up there in Norfolk, it makes the place look like York Minster!

There's been some testing happening, and Marc Marquez is the one to watch once more. It was good to see Jorge Lorenzo bang on it though. If you remember this time last year Jorge was mortified as he hated the tyres, was fat and a bit mind. He has shown he can be a bit on the fragile side now you, so will need to be strong, but I honestly believe he's the only man that can take it to Marquez over an entire season. Curious as well, to who wins the best Brit award by the end of the year, that's going make interesting watching, who's your money on; Cal, Bradley or Scott?

I was also at the Torrens presentation recently where Shane Byrne was given the trophy. How do you like my new fork? It's mega when at a smart restaurant, to lean over to a different table and rob food off another's plate! Not been punched for it yet, but there's a first time for everything. The Torrens Trophy will grow to a bigger event, there's sod all else for motorcycling in the UK. Even in Ireland there's a big do, and club racing series have their own evenings, but BSB and the like has nothing. We're planning for it get bigger too and to create some new awards. It's a tough life being on the committee, almost like having a proper job!



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